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THE WHISPERING DEAD

BY

ALFRED GANACHILLY

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IN the detective story of these pages, there will be some who will recall the excitement that ran through South America a few years before the Great War as each move was swiftly taken by the master-brain which unravelled the knots of one of the most baffling and mysterious crimes of our times. A vast political interest became involved by accident; but, being once in the morass, took sides against justice with cold-blooded effrontery. Everything unwittingly seemed to concentrate on helping the escape of the guilty man; and it was only the dogged logic and the unsleeping vigilance of the famous Chilean detective that at last brought the dead man out of the handsome grave in which Germany had with pomp and goose-step buried him, and so allowed the poor dead mutilated lips to speak and —even at the cost of comic relief to the burial service—brought a felon's doom to the author of the crime. I know no story that could better illustrate the essential German moral of the modern age than this thrilling story of swift adventure.

HALDANE MACFALL

C.D. TRANSFER JUN 19 1939

THE WHISPERING DEAD

PRELUDE

WHERE a brilliantly lighted café in Santiago city sent forth an electric flare into the glorious night of Chile's beautiful capital, enhancing the purple and lilac glory without, in a secluded corner amidst the shadows flung by the glittering splendour of the fashionable café there sat two men in earnest talk at a small table well withdrawn, but not conspicuously isolated from the clatter and chatter of the ranked white tables where rank and fashion were foregathered hard by.

Neither of the men, however, was concerned with the beauty of the night. They spoke low, as in confidence, in short sentences, long intervals between—but their close converse was the deceptive duel of two deadly enemies, close-locked in stilly strife.

There was a skilful cynicism and wit in selecting such a public haunt of fashion for the discussion that was afoot. No man who looked upon them could have guessed what was passing between these two apparently intimate men of the world. Both were of the world of fashion, modishly dressed, mundane of that somewhat smart

raffish mundaneness that suggests the gambler, the man about town, not innocent of debauch.

The fairer man of the two, of medium height and powerful build, was clearly at bay, seeking mercy; the other, reckless, sinewy, graceful in gesture as a leopard is graceful, was pressing with merciless sneer and relentless will for a decision. His gloved hand lay easily on the table, disciplined to hide sentiment; but his cultured voice, pitched low, showed no tinge of pity. The two men understood each other well; and there was no pretence between them.

The slender darker dandy stared cold-eyed at the other—a cynical smile upon his handsome lips.

"Oh, no, my friend—I meet you in no dark cellars nor disguised. Oh, no!"

The fair man, who looked worried, tried to catch the airy cynicism of the other; but he had flushed a little hotly even as he spoke.

"As you will," said he—"but you will confess that your letter read like that of a man who enjoys melodrama."

The dark fellow's keen eyes never left him, embarrassed him, burnt into his pride even as they smiled at him.

"Truth always sounds melodramatic—to a liar," he said.

"Are we here to quarrel?" languidly asked the fair fellow.

The dark man's gloved fingers tapped the back of the other's fat fingers which rested upon the table.

"You *daren't* quarrel"—came the quick retort. "High position has always the defect that a scandal can kill it."

The fair fellow bit his sensual underlip.

" You dub me a shameless gambler; but I am not the only man who gambles in Chile," he said.

"But the others gamble with gold—you with paper promises."

The fair man flushed a little.

" My honour ——"

The other laughed sharply.

"Honour does not gamble with slips of paper against gold, and spend the gold."

In the calm silence that the cynical lips allowed to follow his truism, the fair fellow's blood reddened his face. At last he said hoarsely in his heavy guttural Spanish:

"Where I come from, we allow no man to call us thief and live."

The dark fellow laughed, almost gaily.

"Where *I* come from, we are forbidden to duel with thieves," he retorted; and his Spanish was musical.

The other brooded awhile, the darker man's keen eyes ever upon him. At last he said with guttural solicitude:

"I do not see why we should bandy bitter names. If our friendship is to end——"

The interruption came swift as lightning stroke before the phrase's fuller shaping.

"Our *friendship* ends the day you pay—and I thank my little twinkling stars that it will not be longer than six more full moons."

"I cannot pay——"

"You *shall* pay."

"I mean in six months."

"*I* mean in six months."

"It means utter ruin to me."

"If so; then it is ruin."

"But—but——" the fair fellow stammered in confusion. The other offered no help. "But—I know no way."

The cynical smile returned to the handsome vicious lips of the dark dandy.

"Nonsense," said he. "The man who has played with paper chits against the gold of the bloods of Chile, will find the money before six moons are worn out. Don't be modest. Opera-singers, who get a hundred pounds a night for singing, are not given scraps of paper by you—dancers do not dance for you for paper scrip—if you can pay them you can pay me. You have paid them long enough with my gold. It would not read well in the evening papers." He waved his gloved hand towards a lad who ran by, cry-

ing the news—"Think how the people would gloat over it! You could not live a day longer in Chile."

The fair-haired man lit a cigarette; and after a long silence between them, he at last surrendered.

"I understand. If I cannot find this large sum of money in six months, I am to be made a social outcast."

The dark dandy shrugged his shoulders, rose, and laughed airily.

"I knew you would understand," said he. "Good night."

He stepped serenely into the flare of the brilliantly lighted café and was at once greeted from several tables, as the other stepped from the dark corner into the deeper darkness of the street and quietly stole away.

CHAPTER I

THE sun was shining gaily over the beautiful capital of Chile as the German Ambassador, Baron von Bodmann, walked into the offices of his Embassy, followed by his secretary Baron Welcheck.

The Chancellor, Beckert, seated at his desk, looked up as the great man entered.

"Good morning, Herr Beckert," said the Ambassador, condescending amiably to take notice of the man, who, on hearing his chief's voice, immediately left his typing and stood up, subserviently, clicked his heels together, and, bowing low, replied formally:

"*Guten morgen*, Excellency, I hope your Excellency is quite well." His hands were twitching nervously on the desk, and he put them behind him.

"I am," answered the Ambassador, and added as though the Chilean climate were his footstool—"on a day like this one could not feel otherwise; but, Herr Beckert, you don't look very well yourself—not at all well——" He stared at the livid man.

However, so trivial a matter as this fellow's health did not worry His Excellency overmuch; so he turned his back on Herr Beckert, Chancellor of the Embassy and the Ambassador's right hand. As suddenly he hesitated, halted, and fell a-brooding. What the devil did *he* care what happened to his Chancellor, as long as the fellow did his work properly? If the Chancellor died, there were, in the Kaiser's Empire, hundreds of mere Chancellors awaiting the post and glad to get it. He shrugged, made as though to step towards his own room, hesitated again. But the devil take the fellow! what was the matter with him? He looked as if he had been seeing ghosts! However, he had other things to think of than the bilious attacks of his Staff. He hesitated again, changed his mind—and moved towards the door of his office.

Before His Excellency could step into his private office, Beckert, who was nervous and harried and looked really ill, exclaimed anxiously:

"I have again had news, sir; I have received another anonymous letter saying that my life is at an end, that, before this week is out, I shall be a dead man. It has the Caleu postmark. It is from those men. Your Excellency, I beseech you to ask the Chilean Government, the police, or the army authorities, to place a guard here and at my house. I am certain those Caleu people we prose-

cuted, and who were sent to prison, mean what they say; I have seen suspicious individuals around here off and on. This morning I caught sight of them; and I dared not approach the door of the Embassy offices until I saw the policeman coming along. When he came in sight the men disappeared as if by magic. I am a weak man. I have a weak heart. I could not defend myself against a child. Your Excellency knows I am not able to take care of myself. Please obtain the necessary protection!"

The man was clearly scared; and he spoke with passionate insistence.

His Excellency smiled contemptuously at the pusillanimous individual before him. The ambassadorial, upturned, catlike moustaches nearly touched His Excellency's eyelids, his fat rubicund cheeks grew inflamed, his eyes became hard, his upturned lips showed his white teeth, his appearance was that of a tiger. With his clenched hand held up menacingly towards the Chancellor, he cried hoarsely:

"Coward! Do you imagine for one moment that I am going to disgrace our country, disgrace myself, disgrace Welcheck here, by asking protection for an insect like you? If you mention this to any living soul here in Santiago, or here in Chile—if you mention your fears and your cowardice to any one—I shall dismiss you instantly,

without consulting Berlin. To confess publicly to all Chile that there exists a German coward, never!"

He made a step forward as if to strike the cowed man and stopped perplexed. He had been talking to a coward, to an insect, yet when advancing that one step, what did he see in this man Beckert's eyes? Yet—No, he must have been mistaken; the look which he thought he had seen, the look of a hyena at bay, had disappeared. No; it had gone like a flash—there stood the coward, trembling with fear. It must have been his fancy.

"Excellency, I am no coward," said Beckert gently, but with dignity. "I can face death as well as any of the bravest in the Fatherland. My nerves are jarred; these anonymous letters have destroyed my health through continuous watchfulness. Last night I had another epileptic fit; and excitement and nervous strain render me an easier prey to them." He pulled himself together, drew himself up, and added: "You are right, Excellency; do not ask for protection; *Deutschland über alles*, and also the good name of her brave sons."

"That's the way to talk," said Von Welcheck, patting the shoulder of the Chancellor: "you cannot possibly believe those letters; it must be a joke that is being played upon you."

Beckert smiled a sickly smile, but said nothing. There was a long pause—then he bowed, but his lips did not move. The Ambassador turned from Welcheck to the silent figure.

"I am glad to see you in a more tranquil frame of mind," said His Excellency. "Finish those dispatches as soon as possible; type them yourself; you know their contents must not go further. The work will change the channel of your thoughts." And with his grand manner he stepped into his private bureau.

The Chancellor Beckert watched him under his brows, and his eyes held an ugly look in strange keeping with the coward's part he had just been playing.

CHAPTER II

BECKERT, left alone with Welcheck, watched him under his bushy brows through his glasses out of curious eyes that, by the intentness of their gaze, would have caught the attention of any man except this self-centred dandy. A strained anxiety, uncanny by very reason of the hideous self-discipline that the man was putting upon himself, could not have been lost even on Welcheck at most times. It was more than pathetic. That the Chancellor was in a state bordering upon absolute terror such as he had vowed that the threat of assassination had put upon him, there could be no doubt; but the modish Welcheck happened to have his eyes on other matters, more or less feminine.

At last Welcheck strolled out of the room towards the street, well-groomed and pleased that he was well-groomed. But as he reached the door, he hesitated; what caused him to pause there he himself probably could not have explained. But he said, as if in explanation, that he would be back in a few minutes; the door closed on him; and he was gone.

A look of relief passed over the Chancellor's pallid face. He waited until the last brisk footfall of the departing man pronounced the silence of the room. Then glancing furtively about him, he swiftly crossed the room on tiptoe; glanced behind the large screen that stood across the huge fireplace; tugged it more closely about the hearth, and, in the doing, he nearly slipped to a fall, for the floor thereby was wet as if it had lately been washed. His face became livid. He seemed to dread an enemy in every shadow. Beads of perspiration broke out upon his pallid countenance; he swept his handkerchief over his face as he swiftly and stealthily stepped back to his desk.

Pulling his will together, he sat down at his Adler typewriting machine and tapped out official dispatches with feverish address. The business steadied his nerves, and he was soon thoroughly master of himself.

This man was clearly a man of action; action cleared his brain; lack of action fretted his will. As the click of the typewriter ceased, Beckert was wholly himself again. A man now sat in his seat who, with brows knitted and stubborn will, was setting himself a stern path to follow, a marked and definite design. The tensity of his determination blanched his cheek, but it was the whiteness of a man about to act on a vital decision.

He glanced at the clock. But a quarter of an

hour had gone by since Welcheck had left him alone.

The Chancellor arose deliberately; and, bracing his nerves, knocked at his chief's door, and entering presented the dispatches to the Ambassador for signature. When they were signed, the Ambassador, without looking up, asked Beckert to address them to the Foreign Office, Berlin, and to give him the envelope. Beckert had moved behind the Ambassador, and the evil look in his eyes betrayed no love of the great man.

"I am going to the Post Office with Welcheck and he can post them himself," said His Excellency. "I am leaving nothing to chance." The Chancellor's face blanched as he stepped back with a baffled look, but the other did not notice it as he went on: "These documents should be sent by courier, but maybe it is better to send them by post as the damned English may even waylay the courier and steal them from him. By the way," he looked up, "where is that fellow, the porter, Tapia? I did not see him at the door when I came in."

Beckert steadied his voice and answered indifferently:

"I sent him to the Post Office to get some stamps just before you came, sir; he should be back by now."

Beckert started as Welcheck came into the

room, hat in hand, gloves and stick, quite the dandy. "In your state of nerves," said Welcheck, "you should have that fellow Tapia by you; he is a sturdy chap and faithful; being an old soldier he can handle a sabre or stick and give you ample protection if necessary." He turned to the Ambassador: "Excellency, it is eleven twenty-five, and if you want to go to the Post Office before lunch, I might suggest we go now."

"I am ready," said His Excellency, rising, and following Welcheck, who stepped briskly towards the hat-rack, handed His Excellency his hat, gloves, and stick; opened the door to allow him to pass, bowing slightly as his chief stepped forth after telling Beckert that he would be back about three o'clock when work would be resumed. Welcheck closed the door and followed the great man into the street. Could he have looked into the room he would have seen a black scowl on the subservient Chancellor's face that would have caused him wonder.

The Embassy offices of the Chilean capital were situated in the Calle Nataniel leading from the world-famed Alameda, the beautiful wide avenue which runs from east to west of Santiago, with its broad sidewalks, its roadways on either side crowded with traffic, and in the centre the ample

walk for pedestrians lined by secular trees, which border the picturesque rivulets that run on each side of the promenade.

Under the shade of these gigantic trees that met overhead, His Excellency paused before the wonderful vista of the snow-capped Andes.

"What a climate!" he exclaimed, "nearly chilly in the shade on a midsummer day! Who would believe that in South America one could be cool in summer? But, my dear Baron, these Andes are the refrigerating plant for the heat in the atmosphere and for the blood of the Chileans." After which very original epigram he smiled conceitedly.

"The blood of the Chileans is cold, but—suffering from what they may believe an injustice it boils," said Welcheck; and added, "I don't know, Excellency, what to think about the threats poor Beckert has received. They have undoubtedly made an impression on him. I have often wondered if the 'Compadres' of those men in prison would dare to assault a member of our Embassy. Beckert said this morning that he had seen suspicious persons about, and he was undoubtedly in a frightened and nervous condition. I told him I thought it was a joke, but if he really saw those persons it may turn into a very tragic joke."

They walked on in silence awhile, oppressed

by a feeling of uneasiness; they both knew the complications that would arise if anything happened to Beckert. German dignity would demand the heaviest penalty for the guilty ones. Revenge being the motive of such a crime, doubts would be cast on the imprisonments, which gave cause to it. Were the German Embassy officials quite correct, quite just in the case? Had they not acted a little too harshly, demanding heavier penalties than were deserved? Would the Chilean people sympathize with their countrymen, who, although of the lower classes, carried out the vendetta?

What impression would a crime in the Embassy cause at the Foreign Office in Berlin? No crime is committed without a motive. Had the officials at the Embassy given a motive? If a motive had been given His Excellency thought he would be blamed, if a motive had been given Baron von Welcheck thought he would be blamed. It was their duty to maintain the most cordial relations with all and everyone. To be liked, to be thought "simpaticos," to please every one, to gain each and everybody's confidence; had they failed?

"I am not taking this matter seriously," thought His Excellency aloud.

"Nor I," echoed Welcheck.

They had walked towards the east, towards the Cordillera's snow-capped peaks. They

turned to the left and walked up the Calle Ahumada, where, regardless of their diplomatic position and their titled personalities, they were jostled by the crowds coming out of the shops and the employers and employed hurrying home for lunch.

As they neared the Post Office, each steeped in his own thoughts, they were startled by the twelve o'clock gun, fired at midday, which has startled the natives since the time of the Spanish occupation.

A few minutes later the dispatches had been stamped, registered and posted.

As they walked out of the imposing Post Office building, His Excellency turned towards Welcheck:

"Come to lunch with me," said he—"and then we can go back to the Embassy together. The baroness will be pleased to see you. You young fellows are always after the pretty girls when not at the Club. You have no time to spare on an old couple like us, except diplomatic functions, when you are obliged to come." He laughed sadly.

Baron Welcheck's conscience pricked him. He was fond of his chief, he was the "*enfant gâté*" of the Ambassador. All the work was done by Beckert; Von Welcheck was the society butterfly; he never had time for private calls on the old pair. He felt guilty, and forthwith accepted the invitation with seeming alacrity.

His Excellency hailed a cab, and stepped in, followed by the young baron.

They had not driven three hundred yards when the traffic was stopped at a corner by a policeman, as there flashed by them two fire-engines, full speed, the horses' hoofs rattling furiously on the pavement from which flew showers of sparks, the firemen holding on to their seats as the huge engines bumped along the uneven pavement.

"Another fire," quoted His Excellency, "another bad balance sheet! just think of it on the 5th of February! The auditors were late," alluding to the enormous increase in fires during the fortnight preceding the New Year, and the one following it. "The insurance companies here should set fire to themselves; there would then be no more fires."

A policeman lowered his hand and the blocked traffic resumed its course.

CHAPTER III

TEN minutes later the Ambassador and Welcheck arrived at the Ambassador's house. They had hardly time to get out and reach the front door, when it was opened by the butler—a splendid figure in livery and knee breeches of red velvet, coarse white cotton stockings and buckled shoes.

He looked at first glance a magnificent German flunkey, six feet high, fair, blue-eyed and square-headed. You could not fail to admire the splendid physique of the man; it attracted one; but at a second glance one saw that his breeches were soiled with grease, showing dark spots, his stockings were darned in several places, his shoes had, from ancient comradeship, moulded themselves to his feet and now showed up all the defects and natural deformities thereof.

Baron Welcheck blushed at the sight that his chief's butler presented. He would have given fifty pounds willingly to have this man dressed as he should be dressed; etiquette forbade him. How could a subaltern criticise his chief's love for cheap ostentation which was the laughing stock

of Santiago Society? At the Club Welcheck had been chaffed about it by other diplomats. At parties and public functions the young girls teased him about the splendid butler.

When his chief gave a reception which was only once a year on the Kaiser's birthday and he had perforce to be present to receive the guests, Welcheck could see the smile on their faces when they glanced at the butler with his white piqué four-in-hand tie and celluloid collar. These were moments of great trial. At times he wished the man would die of apoplexy; at others he would laugh outright and joke with the guests about it, winking his eye towards the butler.

On this occasion Welcheck took his eyes away from him impatiently, and followed his chief into the morning room, where the baroness was sitting by a window darning His Excellency's socks, aided by a gold-rimmed pair of spectacles.

"*Guten Morgen*, Frau Excellenze," said von Welcheck, as he came up to her, clicked his heels together, and bowed low, kissing the hand extended to him in greeting.

"Ach, Welcheck, what a pleasant surprise! *Aber lieber*," turning to her husband, "why did you not tell me the dear boy was coming to lunch?" Then looking at His Excellency's socks in her hands—"Ach Gott! look! he finds me

mending your socks! *Nein du lieber*, it is not right, besides being old-fashioned; what will Welcheck think of me in this prosaic occupation? but you are late—Otto announced lunch some time ago, and you must be hungry. I will ring for him to serve at once."

She had hardly reached the bell when Otto's voice was heard: "Excellenze, lunch is ready."

"I am glad you came today, Welcheck, we have a real German lunch—Bismarck herrings, lovely ones—Frankfurter sausages with sauerkraut, and Arme Ritter with golden syrup."

She led the way towards the dining-room, followed by Welcheck and Baron von Bodmann, who insisted that whilst in his own house his young guest should precede him.

They crossed the spacious hall, entered the dining-room, and sat down to the "real German lunch."

They had scarcely tasted the Bismarck herrings, when they were disturbed by the ringing of the telephone bell in the next room, which was the Ambassador's private study.

The butler imperturbably continued his duties, pouring out the wine. It was the footman's day out; it was not the butler's duty to attend to the telephone. The baroness, with the born natural curiosity of women, began to fidget and wished

she knew what the message on the telephone could be—was it for her? or was it some dry, stupid, uninteresting doubt of Beckert's about some important dispatches?

The bell went on ringing merrily. It had begun intermittently, now it was continuous. Baron von Bodmann did not look pleased he also began to fidget. It was beginning to jar on their nerves. They both looked at each other and then at the young baron.

Frau Excellenze thought it was very unfortunate that the footman was out. The baron wondered why the footman did not answer the infernal instrument; and Welcheck, having no responsibility, was amused at the embarrassment of his host and hostess. The more they fidgeted the more his eyes sparkled at the joke; he did not dare to laugh. The bell rang on furiously. As everybody was silent it seemed to grow louder and louder in their ears. The butler's silent footsteps were ghostly; no sound could be heard except that awful bell.

The situation became ridiculous in the extreme. There sat three people hypnotised by a telephone bell without saying a word.

Baron von Bodmann's nerves could stand it no longer.

"Where is the footman, and why does he not answer that telephone?" he exclaimed angrily,

turning to the baroness; and, without waiting for an answer, he added irritably:

"Otto, go at once and stop that noise."

Otto gently put down some plates he was about to place on the table, and with a look of "it isn't my duty" slowly directed his steps towards the adjoining room. When he opened the door the sound of the bell furiously ringing became even louder. At last the deliberate man took up the receiver, and at the same time three sighs of contentment, as nerves were relaxed, escaped upon the sudden silence.

"Telephones are very useful indeed," exclaimed the baroness, "but at times (specially when the footman is out, she thought) they are awful nuisances."

"Still," said the baron, "we are in the wonderful age of wonderful inventions, what should we do without them?"

Otto, through the open door, could be heard exclaiming, "No, *ja*, *so unmöglich*—impossible."

Suddenly he ran into the dining-room, his face and manner betraying the most intense excitement, and burst forth:

"Excellenze! Excellenze! Frau Excellenze! Herr Baron!" In his agitation he could not find words to convey the news.

"Well, what is it?" shouted His Excellency angrily, "can't you speak?"

"Excellenze, they say the Embassy Offices are on fire; the house is destroyed; nothing remains of the building."

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Baron Welcheck, who lives in a flat adjoining the Embassy Offices. "Excellenze, allow me to rise and verify this."

"Go, go quickly; this idiot must have been mistaken." The Ambassador turned and glared at the butler angrily.

Welcheck instantly rose and, stepping briskly towards the Ambassador's room, made for the telephone; His Excellency and the baroness rose and followed him slowly, the butler bringing up the rear. This worthy with a revulsion of bitterness on being called an idiot was hoping to heavens that even the last atom of the buildings would be found to have been burnt to a cinder. That at least would prove that he was not an idiot.

Welcheck took up the receiver and waited. No answer. He banged the receiver with his left hand several times and waited.

"This is enough to drive one mad," he said. "First it rings worse than an alarm clock, now nothing, no answer. Heavens! Excellency, shall we send Otto for a cab and go at once? All documents may not be burnt, maybe there is no fire." He banged and banged on the receiver. No answer. "Donnerwetter! will they never answer?"

"Otto, go for a cab at once, as you are; hurry, hurry!" commanded His Excellency.

Otto forgot his overdressed ease and actually ran off.

The idea of half-burnt but more or less legible secret documents being at the mercy of a curious crowd was not relished by His Excellency. Even if the fire were not at the Embassy but in adjoining houses the firemen would of a certainty break into the Embassy in order to attack the fire from there.

"I shall go mad," said Welcheck, his eyes darting furious looks at the telephone. He looked as if he were going to break the instrument with his fists. He felt like it.

"Hallo! hallo! you rang up to say the German Embassy Offices were on fire, is it so?"

"What number did you say?" came the cackling answer, passionless and official and unhurried.

Welcheck was getting angry, really angry.

"You rang up to say the German Embassy Offices were on fire. I am the Secretary of the Embassy, Baron Welcheck. Tell me quickly if it is true?"

The instrument answered deliberately.

"You are connected with the Central Telephone Office. What number do you want? I can't wait here, there are others waiting for calls."

"Put me on to the Fire Department, quickly, please."

"There you are, Fire Department 409 Alameda; put it down, please, for next time."

Welcheck did not put it down.

"Hallo!" he called impatiently. "Is that the Fire Department?"

The telephone coughed back in another key: "Yes."

"This is the German Embassy. They tell us that there is a fire at the Embassy Offices. Is that so?"

"Don't know," came the wheezing answer, and added dispassionately—"there is a big fire in District 14."

"Is Calle Nataniel in District 14?" asked Welcheck.

"Yes; the fire is in Calle Nataniel."

Without another word Welcheck put down the receiver and turned excitedly to His Excellency:

"The fire is in Calle Nataniel district," he said. "It may be in the Embassy, or in the houses adjoining. Quick! let's get into a cab, and go there . . ."

That instant Otto burst into the room, the perspiration pouring down his face. He had run full speed, eighty yards, and secured a cab. He was out of breath and said, panting, "Excellency, the cab is at the door, you can see immense clouds of

smoke in the direction of the Offices" (*Ach*, thought he, who is the idiot now? and who exaggerating?), "the flames can be seen leaping towards the sky."

His Excellency and Welcheck, followed by the agitated baroness, hurried into the hall, where Otto already held their hats and sticks. They seized them from his hands.

The baroness clung to His Excellency's arm:

"Do not go too near, *mein lieber;* do nothing rash. Do not expose yourself to any danger; be careful, please, won't you, darling? Welcheck, you will take care of him, won't you? He is so rash."

His Excellency responded to the affectionate words by running down the steps with "Yes, yes," as Welcheck followed exclaiming, "Yes, Baroness, yes."

They leaped into the carriage, Welcheck shouting out to the driver:

"Calle Nataniel, quick! drive as hard as you can; there's a good tip; hurry up!"

CHAPTER IV

THE driver, who had noticed the coat of arms over the doorway, after the first apparition of the wonderful butler in red velvet breeches who came running like a madman for him, thought it must be a matter of life and death. Besides, there was a good tip. He plied his whip and cried to his horses, which went away at a gallop.

His fares wanted quick driving; well they would get it; and if the tip were in proportion to speed his tip would be a fine one: It was the luncheon hour and there was consequently no traffic to speak of. His team of native Chilean horses, small, sinewy, direct descendants of the pure Arab, liked excitement. The coachman's words—and at times shrieks—accompanied by the crack of the whip, which, more for display than punishment, was whizzing over their backs, cracking without touching them, lent encouragement to their galloping as they careered along the streets.

At a corner one of the wheels caught the kerb and for a moment they were nearly over. No,

the carriage righted itself and plunged back on to the four racing wheels; but if the pace continued an accident was a deadly certainty. Welcheck, without asking for His Excellency's views, put his head out of the window, and yelled at the man:

"Not so fast, please!"

The coachman, without the least respect for his fares' nerves, looked back over his shoulder without abating his speed in the least:

"*No hay cuiado, patron*" ("There is no danger, master"), he cried.

"Don't look back! mind where you are going!" called Welcheck; "not so fast!"

The coachman smiled. "Go fast! hurry! quick! big tips if you hurry!" He shrugged his shoulders—and muttered in puzzled mood: "You go quick, they get frightened and want to go slow—these damned foreigners never know what they want. Now, if I go slow I won't get any tip. What the devil am I to do?"

During this soliloquy the horses had somewhat moderated their speed, and the anxious occupants seated within the carriage could see people running in the direction of the fire. Some were running in the middle of the street, and this further obliged the horses to slow down.

"In two minutes we are there," said Welcheck.

"I hope the fire is not at the office. The archive is not in a fireproof room, it will be an

awful entanglement if anything is burnt. *Gott!* I hope not," said His Excellency.

They were silent under this impending disaster. As they approached Calle Nataniel by the Alameda entrance they were stopped by a policeman. The crowd on foot was enormous; the cab could not go further through the seething mass. The two men got out, paid the driver handsomely, and threaded their way through the crush—it was a tedious business. Another policeman stopped them. The Ambassador took out his card, which, upon being read by the policeman, changed this official's haughty bearing into obsequiousness. He bowed low, as he requested them to follow him. He opened a way through the crowd, which could see nothing, as the fire was hidden from view around the corner.

At last after battling their way with the help of their guide, they came in view of the conflagration. It was tremendous. They were still a good hundred yards away, but now having turned the corner into Nataniel itself they felt the blast of the heat; it seemed to be flung straight into their faces. Their eyes smarted with the smoke, which was invisible.

Looking over the heads of the crowd they saw what they had most feared—the Embassy Offices existed no longer. As they gazed, the walls dividing the premises from the flat occupied by Wel-

check crashed down into what had been the back part of the offices two hours before.

Millions of sparks, live cinders, and smoke burst upwards a hundred feet high. The crowd gave forth a rumbling roaring sound of admiration at the sight; then came shrieks, curses—the glowing embers were falling on those whom curiosity had made over-bold and so had approached too near. The cordon of police rushed backwards in close formation towards the crowds, pushing them back and away from the fiery furnace—they had seen the danger, and were themselves smarting from the red-hot missiles belched forth by the fire. The crowd in their turn were fiercely fighting to retreat, driven back by the burning cinders that fell, scorching their clothes, and stinging their necks and faces and hands. The dense crowd behind gave way to the intenseness of the backward pressure.

Spectators nearest the conflagration were screaming with pain at the burns received. Before the rain of sparks their clothes were become so tinder dry, and hot to burning, from the furnace glow of the tremendous heat of the fire, that in some cases the agonized people had caught fire and the poor victims had actually gone mad with pain. A fireman who stood close by, and who kept pouring water over his clothes, so as to save himself from the shower of dangerous cinders that

rained about him, seeing the frightful situation of those in front of the crowd, turned the hose full on them. A score went down, knocked over by the force of the water, but the fall was gratefully received by such as were dreading being burnt alive.

Von Bodmann and Welcheck who were in the middle of the crowd, but not far enough away to escape the pressure, were nearly flung off their feet. They joined forces with those who were slowly retreating, and, after a few minutes' hard struggle, found themselves comparatively free from the crowd.

Seeing a police officer on horseback they made their way to him.

"Could you tell us what time the fire started?" asked Welcheck.

"At four minutes to twelve we got the alarm."

Both His Excellency and Baron Welcheck tried to pull out their watches to see how long the fire had lasted, but the watches were gone.

"My watch has been stolen!" they both exclaimed in a breath. They felt for their pocketbooks; and a blank look of amazement told the police officer that these were gone also.

The officer smiled at their consternation.

"Crowds like this are very dangerous," he said. "It is next to impossible to catch a pickpocket in the act over there." He pointed to the vast mass

of people. "You should not have gone so close. Please send details of pocket-books, and the numbers of your watches, to Headquarters; and we shall look for them."

The contents of pocket-books were easy enough, but the numbers of their watches! they never knew watches had numbers.

"Would a description of the watches do?" asked Welcheck.

"Yes."

"Where did the fire start?"

"At the Embassy Offices."

"That is impossible," exclaimed von Bodmann. "We were there until eleven-thirty and the Chancellor Herr Beckert must have left shortly after, about midday. No! Mr. Officer, it could not have started at the Embassy Offices."

"I beg your pardon, sir; I do not know who you are, but I will not allow you to contradict me. I say, and I repeat, that the fire broke out at the Embassy Offices. The policeman on the beat called me up on the telephone and gave the alarm. I was with the first to arrive, and the fire started where I said. The door was locked; we could not get in; and when the fireman arrived the whole place was in flames, burning like an inferno."

"If it were burning as you say, it must have started somewhere else. What time did you arrive here?"

"To be precise, three minutes after the midday gun. I have it in my report."

"Herr Beckert must have left shortly before midday, never before twenty minutes to twelve; is it possible for a fire to spread as you say in twenty-three minutes?"

"I have been to many fires and this one must have been burning for at least an hour. It must have begun at about eleven o'clock or else——" The officer's face clouded at the thought. . . . Then he addressed the two gentlemen.

"Can you tell me who you are? you seem very interested in the matter." Then nodding to two plain-clothes policemen who stood at a short distance he looked fixedly at the two diplomats, continuing, "You have just said that you were there at eleven-thirty."

"Yes," answered von Bodmann, "we were there at eleven-thirty. I am His Imperial Majesty the German Emperor's Ambassador, and this gentleman is Baron Welcheck, my Secretary."

"Have you a card?"

"No."

"Have you any documents to prove what you say?"

"No."

"I am sorry, gentlemen, but you will have to prove your identity. You will please remain where you are whilst I go for the chief who is

over there," pointing towards the fire. "He will recognize you; will you kindly wait here?"

"How can we have a card or documents when you know they were stolen from us just now? Do you mean to say we are under arrest? Remember I am the German Ambassador; and no one can arrest me or my staff. Enough of this nonsense! Welcheck, let us go!"

The officer moved his horse a trifle, imperceptibly, barring their way.

"Gentlemen, please be reasonable. You have confessed to being at the scene of the fire just before it started. You cannot prove your identity. I do not arrest you. I do not detain you. I only ask you to kindly oblige me by waiting here two minutes, only two minutes."

They were two typical Germans in whom the inborn sense of discipline, the respect for uniforms and for authority had become second nature.

They did not resent the police officer's insinuations as much as diplomats of other nations would have done, and after a mute consultation they decided to comply with the police officer's request, and to wait for the Chief of Police to come and identify them.

CHAPTER V

THE Ambassador looked at the officer's retreating figure with growing anger in his eyes. Welcheck, remembering the Frau Baroness's parting injunctions, and noting the growing anger in his chief's eyes laughed quietly, and smiling said:

"Excellenze, this is an experience you have never had before; it is the best joke I have had for a long time! you and I are under arrest for burning our own property and not a penny insurance money to come. Ha, ha!" and, laughing loudly at the thought, he added, "Excellenze, you will spend the night in prison! Ha, ha! I will act your valet if they put us together; I am sure it would do us no harm. It will be a novel experience. We would be the heroes of the hour. How the papers would exploit the joke! it is magnificent. I am beginning to regret that our polite and diplomatic officer did not arrest us at once. Heavens! it would have taken my mind off my dear little flat and all its belongings; it was really charming. If those walls could speak they would have to blush at so doing." Welcheck's tongue ceased as he found the Ambassa-

dor in no mood for raillery; but his thoughts ran on, as he gazed at the gap where his flat had once been. "*Ach!*" thought he, "Carmencita, never again will that roof shelter our love. Those hours spent with you among my beautiful knicknacks are passed." He sighed and strolled a few steps from his chief, who looked admiringly at the young man, who could bear with a light jest the loss of all his treasures and personal belongings.

Welcheck, deep in thought, regretting his loss, continued his walk. He had not gone ten yards when he found he had a companion. He looked at the man, thinking it must be a friend of his coming to condole with him over his loss, but his surprise was great when he realized that he had never met the man before. He stopped short and retraced his steps towards von Bodmann. The man did not follow him. As he came up to von Bodmann he said:

"We are as much under arrest as though behind steel bars. That man," looking towards his late companion, "is a detective. I am shadowed; there is my jailer; they are polite and tactful, but it is disagreeable. It is an experience we have never had before; enjoy it, Excellenze, we shall never have another like it."

As he finished there came towards them the Officer of Police, accompanied by the Chief of Police—a little man with a white pointed beard;

his soft felt hat shaded piercing eyes, and the light played about an aquiline nose and square jaw.

The thought occurred to both the Germans, were they really going to be arrested? The answer came almost as swiftly from the Chief of Police. The little man stepped up, having recognized them, and took off his hat to the diplomats.

"Good afternoon, Excellency," he said. "Good afternoon, Baron Welcheck! What a calamity! What a misfortune this fire is! It must be a great loss to you. I hope you have a strong room and a good safe. Embassy documents are not easily replaced. I am here at your service; and I must really congratulate my subaltern," pointing to the police officer, "for asking you to wait here; you have all the police force at your disposal. We may even now be able to save something. It is fortunate you waited, as I would like you to appoint someone to witness the digging up of the debris. Papers, Excellency, when closely packed, have been known to stand terrific heat. We would like you to appoint an agent, and would not consider it a usurpation of our prerogatives." He laughed pleasantly, and added: "Would you like to come nearer, the heat has died down?"

"I am afraid we cannot approach much nearer," said the Ambassador.

"But, Excellenze," said Welcheck, "why not? we cannot lose our watches and pocket-books twice." He laughed good-naturedly and looked at the Chief of Police.

"My police are excellent," the Chief of Police smiled, "there are no better in the world; the trouble is there are so many innocents abroad; still," he added seriously, "you may rest assured your watches at least are as safe as in your own pockets. Just imagine you have lent them for a week, you will have them back within that time. As for the pocket-books—that is another matter. The pocket-book itself is worthless to the thief, it is generally put into the fire, but the contents are very much appreciated; we shall try and recover them, but we can promise nothing. . . . Well," continued the chief, "what are your Excellency's wishes? Shall we approach the fire? But I must tell you that you will see nothing at all except ruins and smoke."

"No," said Von Bodmann, "it is no use; how long will it be before the offices can be approached? before salvage work can be begun?"

"It is difficult to say," the chief answered; "what think you, Rojas?"

The subaltern was taken unawares. He did not dream his chief would consult him. He stood at attention, thought for a moment, and said:

"I think by about eight o'clock in the evening,

if all the engines now working continue pouring water on the debris."

The chief smiled, satisfied at the answer; he had made the same calculation himself.

"Excellency," he said, "you may take it that work will be begun at eight o'clock."

The Ambassador suddenly came to a decision:

"Do you know Herr Beckert, Chief?"

"It is part of my duty to know everyone."

"I shall send him here to act for the Embassy. I wonder where he is? Where could we find him?"

"He must be amongst the crowd somewhere." The Chief of Police turned to his lieutenant: "Rojas, do you know Herr Beckert, the Chancellor?"

"Yes, sir, he lives in my beat."

"Well, go and find him amongst the crowd."

"Yes, sir,"

"Come and report to me within a quarter of an hour if you cannot find him."

As the Chief of Police dismissed the other on his errand, he turned towards His Excellency, and asked:

"Can we do anything else for you?"

"Nothing, thank you, yet; but if you will telephone to my house as soon as you find Beckert, I would be obliged; and thanks again for your courtesy."

Von Bodmann shook hands with the Chief, and, turning to Welcheck, he said sharply:

"Come, Welcheck, we have work before us."

Welcheck waved good-bye to the Chief of Police. He had promised himself a parting shaft at him for their semi-arrest, but all these petty schemes of vengeance had vanished—the courteous, dignified, and pleasant attitude of the man had dispelled them, their leave-taking was cordial.

"Excellency," said Welcheck, when they were out of hearing, "that man is clever; he is a born diplomat, he turned our arrest into a favour on the part of the officer."

"*Ach*, I had forgotten all about it; we have other things to think of. We must cable Berlin about this. Cable Buenos Ayres for another code book; if they have one to spare at the Embassy there, very well, if not we must cable Berlin."

"In that case," said Welcheck, "four weeks at least must pass before it arrives."

"Maybe ours was put away in the safe; Beckert is so careful." But the Ambassador spoke uneasily.

Welcheck did not comfort him:

"All Beckert's care could not save the contents in that safe, it was at least forty years old. No; all is destroyed. Still," added Welcheck with the optimism of youth, "we must not despair."

"You do not know what you are saying, my young friend."

"What am I to do?" said Welcheck despondingly, seeing his chief's grave face, and thinking of himself. "If everything is burnt I have nothing, not even a change of clothing, not even a watch. I have," feeling in his pockets, "exactly sixty cents."

"You have," said His Excellency, "everything; you have everything in that you have credit; don't bother about that. Go to an hotel to-night; buy a change of clothing; the rest you will get later on."

CHAPTER VI

THE person for whom on this memorable day, the 5th of February, 1908, this Chancellor for whom the German Ambassador and Señor Castor, the Chief of the Secret Police, were making such keen search, was born in Nuremburg in 1870.

His full name was Wilhelm Rudolph Beckert. He had gone to the University of Nuremburg, reading law. He had graduated with honours.

He was only twenty-one years of age when there fell out of the blue a bolt which obliged him to leave Germany.

One evening he and several other young lawyers were sitting in the "Bier Halle." They had all imbibed freely. Beckert was young, and, like most youth when carousing, was indiscreet. He loudly proclaimed to his friends that the lovely young wife of Lieutenant Franz Hofmeyer had fallen an easy prey to his seductive powers. He was beginning to describe her wonderful charms when a violent blow knocked him half senseless on the floor. Lieutenant Franz Hofmeyer, unknown to young Beckert, had been sitting at the next table.

Half an hour after, the duel was arranged for the next break of day.

As the rising sun showed its first pale days, the duellists faced each other in the woods that lie in the eastern outskirts of Nuremburg.

In such a solemn business, as a swordsman, Wilhelm R. Beckert stood no chance; but luck was with him—he did not know how he did it, perhaps his very lack of skill, but he struck out and there at his feet lay Lieutenant Franz Hofmeyer of the Prussian Guard, dead. He had run his sword clean through the Guardsman's heart.

In Germany an officer may kill a civilian in a duel; God help the civilian who kills an officer!

That same morning Beckert fled from his country, and after extensive travelling for about a year found himself in Chile. He liked it and stayed there, waiting for his pardon. His father and uncle had employed the best lawyers to obtain it; and after thirteen years it had been granted. In the meantime both his uncle Leopold and his father had died.

After having led an adventurous life and squandered first the fortune that his uncle Rudolf had left him, and then gone through his father's, Beckert, being well connected, had obtained admittance into the diplomatic service.

As we have seen, he was now Chancellor of the Embassy. He was an ambitious man; he worked

very hard; he was punctuality itself—always first to arrive at the office, always last to leave. As he had only been lately admitted into the service, he knew he must observe the most exemplary conduct. He had to prove that he had really sown and done with sowing his "wild oats"; he had so far proved it to His Excellency.

He had been fifteen years in Chile; he spoke Spanish nearly like a Chilean, whilst His Excellency spoke very little Spanish; and Welcheck was a "drawing-room diplomat." It is true that ugly rumours had reached His Excellency of the early life of Beckert. Still, at present and since he had known him he had not found the slightest fault in the man. The Ambassador was satisfied.

Beckert was now thirty-eight years of age—a short man, some five feet seven inches in height, but well built, with broad powerful shoulders.

The wild nights spent in debauch and at the gaming table had caused premature baldness, especially over the temples. This gave to his egg-shaped head an air of intellectuality. His bluish grey eyes were deep set, under thick bushy eyebrows. There was a hard sarcastic look about them, a look of determination, endurance, strength, boldness, but at the same time insincerity gleamed from behind the gold-rimmed eyeglasses. Following, like all Germans, the fashion

launched by the Kaiser, he wore a long moustache combed upwards. His mouth was small, his lips thin and closely drawn together. His jaw was large and square, which still more pronounced the look of determination.

Although he was in the diplomatic service, he had not been able to introduce himself to Chilean Society. The reason for this was that he had, three years before, married Natalia Lopez, a charming, beautiful girl. Unfortunately for her, she had been on the stage, had sung, had danced, had exposed to view her beautiful bodily charms to the gallery for one shilling, for a better and closer inspection price in proportion. Chilean Select Society would not admit public dancers.

Natalia, being beyond the pale of society, in her isolation was still if possible more in love with her husband.

This afternoon of the great fire she was sitting at the piano, most charmingly attired in a mauve crêpe de chine dress, singing a sad Chilean love-song. All her thoughts were centered on her husband, her beautiful breast heaved with a sigh as she gave forth the last sad lamenting note. She had an intangible vague idea that his love was waning.

A servant came in to say that the Embassy

wanted to speak to her husband on the telephone. She rose immediately to answer the call.

"Hallo!" said she, taking up the receiver.

"I am the butler of the Embassy," said a voice, "can I speak to Herr Beckert?"

"Herr Beckert is out."

"Do you know where he is?"

"He must be at the Embassy Offices."

"He can't be there, the offices have been burnt down to the ground."

"*Dios mio*," she exclaimed, "are you sure?"

"Oh, yes."

"*Virgen Santisima!* He did not lunch here. can anything have happened to my husband?"

"Oh! no, madame, he is safe, right enough; he must be in the crowd watching the fire."

CHAPTER VII

AT the other end of the phone, the butler hung up the receiver, and went to report the answer to his enquiry to the impatient Ambassador, with whom was Welcheck. The Ambassador was pacing up and down the room.

Von Bodmann heard him with disappointment and anger on his fat face.

"Telephone again," he said harshly, "and say he is to come here immediately after he arrives there—immediately, I said, do you hear me?"

"Yes, Excellenze."

"It is incredible," said His Excellency. "He should be here. He must by this time have gone to the offices and found the place burnt out; he should have come here at once. *Ach!* when most you want a man the more difficult it is to find him."

"He will be sure to come here," said Welcheck. "He may arrive at any moment."

Baron von Bodmann stopped in his walk abruptly.

"It is now five o'clock," he said. "Do you understand? five o'clock! he has had three, four,

five hours to get here. He should have been here at the latest at three; he should at least have been at the office at that hour. If he went there at that time, he has since had two hours to come here."

"Maybe he saw us in the crowd and lost sight of us; he may think we are still there, and be looking for us."

"I am afraid something must have happened to him, Welcheck; telephone to the police, to our friend Castor; ask to speak to him; tell him our fears. Beckert is not the man to stay away when work is to be done. Telephone at once! Stay! tell Castor he has not been to his own home to lunch, and his wife does not know his whereabouts."

Welcheck went to the telephone.

His Excellency continued to pace the room, deep in thought. Could Beckert's fears have been realized? Had the friends or "compadres" of the men from Caleu carried out their threat? Had anything happened to Beckert? All these questions and many others presented themselves to him in a whirl. Everyone knew by this time, half-past five o'clock, that the Embassy Offices had been demolished by fire. Beckert must have known about it; was he there when it broke out? When did he leave the office? Where had he lunched? Why did he not arrive?

In the midst of all these doubts Welcheck returned.

"Excellency! Señor Castor says Beckert is not to be found amongst the crowd. I gave him your message that he had not lunched at home. Castor has sent messages to all the clubs to find out if he is in any one them. He insinuates—insinuates only—that Beckert may have lunched with a lady —Miss or Mrs. Mercedes Pacheco, I did not quite catch it. Castor says he knows that Beckert visits this lady occasionally, and that if he did go to lunch there today and she had made up her mind to keep him there, Beckert would have been no human being if he had resisted her charms and left. He has sent a messenger to the lady's house, and will telephone to us as soon as he has news."

"*Dummheiten!*" said His Excellency, "Castor does not know Beckert. A stupid supposition. Beckert is not given that way; well, we must wait; in the meantime let us work."

Welcheck smiled ironically; but said nothing. He took up a pen, and settled to work.

His Excellency continued pacing the room, Welcheck writing to dictation. Telegrams were their principal occupation.

In the midst of this work Castor rang up to say he had not been able to locate Beckert.

They continued work until shortly after seven, when His Excellency instructed Welcheck to go

and have some dinner, and immediately afterwards to return to the scene of the fire.

"The work of excavation will by then have begun, Welcheck. You must be present. All the archives may not be burnt; you must secure any unburnt papers; and deposit them in the safe of the German Club which is close by. Get the key of the safe from the secretary. Report to me what papers you find. I shall probably be up all night; I have still great work to do, so come at any time."

"Yes, Excellenze."

"Ask Castor to try and place his hands on Beckert. *Ach!* this man! I shall certainly dismiss him." He clenched his hands in anger. "*Verdampter Kerl!*"

CHAPTER VIII

WELCHECK left, but instead of going to the German Club as ordered by His Excellency, he went to the Anexo A of the Oddo Hotel, where he secured a room for the night. He then stopped at a haberdasher's and purchased the necessary linen and pyjamas to keep him going for two or three days; and thereafter directed his steps to the Club, where he passed for rudeness itself, not answering any of the questions his friends put to him. He justified himself, thinking that he must fulfil his duty, and be at the scene of the fire at the earliest possible moment.

As he slipped stealthily up the grand old mahogany staircase of the Club, he saw the *maître d'hôtel* standing on the landing which leads into the magnificent dining-room.

"*Buenas noches*, Señor Baron," saluted the *maître d'hôtel*, bowing to Welcheck.

"*Buenas noches*, Alfredo, I want something to eat and to be served as quickly as you can arrange it."

"Señor Baron, shall I make the menu myself?"

"Very well, Alfredo; but, mind you, two courses only, quickly; also coffee and a good cigar."

The *maître* accompanied Baron Welcheck to a table, followed by two liveried waiters, one of them helping the Baron to his seat, the other in the meantime taking the slip of paper which Alfredo had written out and which contained instructions for the Baron's dinner.

The *maître*, with natural curiosity, lingered beside the table, fingering the wine-list. At last said he:

"May I offer the Señor Baron my sympathy? I hear his home has been burnt as well as the Embassy. There was a rumour that His Excellency and all the staff had been burnt at first; it is really lucky that you were able to escape over the roofs of the houses adjoining. Someone was saying that if it had not been for Tapia, you would all have been burnt alive."

The mention of Tapia's name made Welcheck start. Here was another one missing! the Embassy porter, Tapia! Certainly the porter of the Embassy should have reported himself at the residence of the Ambassador. Not a single thought had been given to the man. Welcheck was puzzled; but the *maître's* smiling face brought him back with a start to earth. He shook his head.

"No, no," said he. "All you have heard are

inventions, there was no one at the Embassy Offices when the fire broke out. I did not know of it till after one o'clock."

The *maître* lifted his eyes to heaven with an air of resigned martyrdom, and said:

"Baron, one can believe nothing nowadays."

Alfredo was sorry such a thrilling hair-breadth escape was not true. The *maître d'hôtel* of the Club de l'Union actually talking, perhaps the first one, to one of the heroes! He had fancied himself a most important person. How the waiters would want to hear what the Baron had told him! He had imagined how he would keep them in suspense and let out bits of news little by little.

All his importance now vanished, as his hero sat waiting for his dinner, a hero no more.

Welcheck ordered his wine and dismissed the *maître;* he was now alone in the spacious dining-room and his thoughts reverted to the Embassy porter, Tapia.

He knew that Tapia did not drink; Tapia was a very steady, good, faithful, hard-working man. He was also very quick, very bright, and intelligent. In the army he had acquired habits of discipline which, surely, would make him report himself in an emergency to headquarters, to the Embassy; why had he not done so? Maybe in his humble way, and following the discipline

hammered into him, he had not thought it fit to approach the Embassy directly.

"*Ach!*" thought Welcheck, "I see! He must have tried to find me. He knows my flat exists no longer. Respect for the Ambassador did not allow him to seek any of us at the Ambassador's private residence. He must have gone to Beckert's house; he must be there waiting for orders; perhaps with Beckert himself who may have been hurt trying to save dangerous documents which it would never do that the public should ever see."

The more he thought of this idea, the more he was convinced that it solved the riddle of the unaccountable absence of these two. Yes, Beckert must be hurt; he must have been taken home, perhaps unconscious. No! that could not be; they had asked Mrs. Beckert to telephone immediately he arived. She had not done so, but then again, yes! Beckert must be home; and Mrs. Beckert, whose devotion to her husband was well known, seeing him arrive wounded, bleeding, unconscious, must have lost all presence of mind. Seeing her husband in that state, nothing else but his comfort would occupy her. Yes! she had forgotten to telephone, he must be there.

He had arrived at this conclusion when his dinner was brought to him.

The *maître* himself was supervising the waiters.

Welcheck nodded to him to approach.

"Alfredo," said he, "please send me a telephone boy at once."

"Señor Baron, I have a telephone just outside the door. I am not busy yet, can I telephone your message? It will be quicker."

"Well, yes; but keep this to yourself; telephone to the house of Herr Beckert, Providencia 69, and ask if he is home; if he is, let me know as I wish to speak to him at once."

Alfredo bowed, and with a "*Si*, Señor Baron," he gravely retired, feeling himself entrusted with a most secret and delicate diplomatic mission.

Five minutes later the *maître* returned, graver still, overpowered by the importance of the news he had to convey.

"Señor Baron," he said slowly and impressively, "I have spoken with Señora Beckert; she answered the telephone herself. Before I could say a word, she asked me in a very agitated voice if I was telephoning news of her husband. I answered her that I had been asked by the Señor Baron if Herr Beckert had arrived. She seemed very upset and said that she knew nothing of her husband's whereabouts, as she had already told His Excellency, and that she felt convinced something had happened to Señor Beckert, that she felt very, very anxious on his account, and that she begged and implored the Baron to have inquiries made by the

police as nothing but an accident of the worst kind could account for her husband's prolonged and unexplainable absence from home. The poor lady's voice trembled with suppressed fear and emotion, and it has cut me to the heart to hear the pathetic appeal she has asked me to transmit to you."

Welcheck received this message in silence, and remained thoughtful for a few seconds; suddenly he turned round to the expectant *maître* and said simply:

"Extraordinary! thank you very much, Alfredo; but stay; just ring Mrs. Beckert up once more and say that I will certainly look into this matter at once, and ask her if Tapia has been to the house."

Alfredo feeling more and more important on his second diplomatic mission, which already savoured of mystery, again pompously retired.

In a short time he returned saying that Señora Beckert had no news of Tapia, and had not seen him that day.

"What! Tapia has not been there either?" Welcheck exclaimed, really surprised to find that all his reasoning was falling to the ground.

"Yes, Señor Baron, that is what Señora Beckert said."

Welcheck was puzzled, he did not know what to make out of all this. He quickly finished his dinner and hurriedly left the Club. At the door he

asked the porter for a cab, and drove to the Calle Nataniel. It was nearing eight o'clock.

As Welcheck was driven to the scene of the fire he suddenly started forward in his seat. He was about to call to the driver to stop, but as suddenly dropped back into the seat again. He had been staring at a man who stood at the corner of the street; the fellow turned and Welcheck saw by his beard that he was mistaken.

"The devil take the man!" he growled—"that fellow Beckert must be getting on my nerves—I could have sworn it was he."

CHAPTER IX

IT was clear that the sanitary police and firemen were beginning work amongst the wreckage by means of big acetylene flare lamps. Welcheck could see this from the barrier where he had been stopped by the police. He gave his name and asked for Señor Castor the Chief of Police. The constable asked him to wait. "I will tell Señor Castor that you are here; he has just come back."

In a few minutes he saw Castor coming towards him.

"Good evening, Señor Baron!"

"Good evening, Señor Castor; I came here to take the place of Señor Beckert as regards taking over the archives and reports. We cannot find him; have you any news of him?"

"No, Baron, I have not; nor of the porter, Tapia."

"Do you think anything may have happened to them?"

"Yes, but at present we can say nothing, except that the absence of both must be explained, and that soon."

"Have you instituted a search?"

"Yes, Baron, and a thorough one; they are not to be found, I fear, except there." He pointed to the desolation caused by the fire.

"When will the salvage work begin?"

"It has begun already, Señor Baron."

"My instructions, Señor Castor, are to be present whilst this is proceeding."

"With pleasure. Let us approach; you are welcome to all the steam, smell and smoke; it is not pleasant work. If the absence of the Chancellor and Tapia had not given rise to suspicion, the work would not have been begun till tomorrow."

"Do you expect to find the bodies there?" said Welcheck, paling at the thought of the horrible death these two men might have suffered.

"I cannot say," answered Castor, "but if they are not there, then I am inclined to think——" he left the sentence unfinished and quickened his pace, leading into the smoking ruins.

The workmen were hard at work already; they had made secure such timber as threatened them on the ground floor, which was up to the neck with debris.

"Where was the Chancellor's desk?" asked Castor.

"His desk was there," said Welcheck, pointing to where it had stood.

"Then," said Castor, "we must excavate around it; where would he sit?"

Welcheck pointed to the place.

Castor called for the man in charge of the Sanitary Police. When he came he was directed to proceed with the excavation over the space usually occupied by Beckert.

"See that this is done very carefully," said Castor.

The work was continued with pick and shovel.

"It may not be very long before we know where we are," said Welcheck.

"In about half an hour the debris should be removed sufficiently to allow us to ascertain whether those we seek are here or not," said Caster.

"Yes," replied Welcheck, "and if we find them?"

"Then we must find the cause, Señor Baron."

"The murderers, you mean. Do you now know, Señor Castor, that Herr Beckert has been fearing the assassin's knife for a year?"

"What! do you mean to say you suspect some one?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean that this fire is not accidental?"

"I cannot go as far as all that, but then again Beckert is missing, so is Tapia. If we find them

here they have been murdered—at least that is my opinion. Maybe the fire was intentional, so as to cover the traces of crime."

"All is possible; but what grounds have you for your opinion?"

"The menacing letters he had received."

"Menacing letters! from whom?"

"From unknown persons, but all bearing the postmark of Caleu."

"Of Caleu? Do you associate the persecution of those poor people with this fire? Impossible!"

"Señor Castor," said Welcheck, "you have said persecution; we, the Embassy, did not persecute, we only, rather Beckert only, asked for a just punishment, not a persecution."

"Call it as you like, Señor Baron; a blow struck in defence of one's—well—home, shall we call it? is not a crime. Here in Chile, no man, whoever he be, can tolerate insult to his—home, as we said. No! not even were the insult from your Kaiser, much less the Chancellor of your Embassy."

The little man, his tiny grey eyes sparkling with indignation, lifted his head proudly, glared at the baron, and added:

"We are a small country, Baron, but we hold our honour greater than that of the whole world put together."

"You will then, if Beckert is found here, call it retaliation?" sneered Welcheck.

"I will call it nothing; the poor man Jose Contresas and his son are in prison, imprisoned for defending the honour of the old man's daughter, imprisoned solely through the pressure exerted by your Embassy. Bah! I went into the case thoroughly. At any rate, Jose Contresas could do you no harm; neither could his son. They are both in prison. The next son, Manuel, is only fourteen; he is too young to undertake—as yet—the vendetta."

"How can you then explain to me the presence of suspicious persons around this place this morning?"

"What suspicious persons? Who? When?"

"When I arrived this morning with the Ambassador we found the Chancellor in an extremely nervous condition; he told us that he had not dared approach the offices until he had seen the policeman on the beat; that he had spoken to him and they had walked to the offices together. He said that as soon as the persons he feared had seen him with the policeman they disappeared as if by magic."

"Señor Baron, I do not believe any one from Caleu would have done this, they are too simple-minded. No, Baron, murder by fire is not the

method used by a man who seeks revenge. No! not here in Chile," said Castor, and added, "We are supposing all sorts of things and have as yet nothing to go upon; we are really talking nonsense; let us wait; we shall soon know."

CHAPTER X

THEY stood silently amidst all the hubbub surrounding them. The engines could be heard throbbing as they pumped water into the debris of the adjoining houses. The murmur of the ever-changing crowds came to their ears.

They were standing in a corner on the wet debris. A disagreeable pungent smell, a smell that clings to the throat, nose, and clothes for days, arose from the ground. They were both interested, watching the progress of the workmen. The men knew their business, and the work proceeded rapidly.

The space on which Castor had ordered the men to concentrate particular care was being rapidly cleared; there remained about three feet of charred rubbish to clear before reaching the floor.

Suddenly one of the workmen gave forth a loud exclamation:

"*Carne caramba*, flesh, by Jove!" he said, "I have got a bite."

He pulled his pick out with difficulty. At the end of it and pierced right through the instep was a foot charred almost beyond recognition.

Castor immediately sprang forward, ordering the men to cease work for a moment. He then examined the position of the foot and leg, called for the photographer, and asked the men to continue work very carefully with their hands and on no account to disturb the body.

"We must ascertain what the person was doing and how he met his death. The only clue we have at present lies here," said Castor.

The police doctor now joined Welcheck and Castor. He assumed command, and superintended the removal of the rubbish covering the corpse. As the work went on the silhouette of the body became apparent. The photographer occasionally took a photograph of the scene.

Little by little the charred bones of the right hand appeared, pointing heavenwards towards the starlit night. The hand and arm seemed to appeal to God for justice. Castor, more experienced, said, "His arm is extended upwards as though to ward off a blow, or perhaps to shield himself from something falling."

The body lay on its left side nearly face downwards. The right arm extended upwards, as we have said. The legs were drawn up close to the body, which rested on a pile of charred documents. The police doctor examined the face and head. Of the face, nothing was left except the blackened bones. The head showed two round holes on the

back of it, about an inch and a half in diameter. The left tibia was broken close below the knee. The body appeared entirely naked, the fire having consumed all the clothes.

Under the body was found a silver cigarette case, a pair of spectacles, a wedding ring, several metal studs, a gold watch and chain, and some silver.

These were taken to a strong light, and on close examination were identified by Welcheck as belonging without a shadow of a doubt to Beckert.

The wedding ring contained the following inscription, "From N. L. to W. B."

"It is clear," said Welcheck, "clear as daylight. This was from his wife; Natalia Lopez to William Beckert. Poor chap, this will be a terrible blow for his poor wife." Then he added petulantly, "What rotten luck! stupid fool to go and die like that! now I shall have to do all the work myself, both mine and his." He was angry, he only thought of himself, and the inconvenience his brother diplomat's death would cause him.

But Dr. Molina and Castor were carefully examining the body. After a few minutes' observation the doctor stood up, and said:

"The skull does not present any signs of crushing. The fracture, which we see, seems to have been due to one or more blows dealt with a blunt instrument. One cannot say that this skull is

fractured, in fact nearly half of it is missing."

Doctor Molina turned to several of the workmen and enquired: "Were there any beams or steel joists over the body?"

"No, sir," answered one of the men—he who had discovered the dead man.

"What was there over it, then?"

"A thick layer of dust and ashes about three feet deep; we were able to remove this with our hands."

"Are you absolutely sure of this?"

"Oh! yes," intervened Castor; "he was the man who found the body; and Baron Welcheck and myself were here much before that, and there were no beams or anything heavy enough to inflict these wounds."

"This is very strange," the doctor muttered.

Castor asked the police photographer to take more photographs of the body as it lay.

When this task was finished Castor told the police to remove the remains as carefully as possible and convey them to the ambulance. He turned to Welcheck:

"Shall we send the remains to the morgue, Baron? or shall we send them to his house?"

"Send them wherever you like!"

He was in a fearful rage, and was only called back to himself by Castor's stern reproof:

"Señor Baron, your sentiments are not to be envied; we don't care how much work this dead man may throw upon you to do; this gentleman was your countryman. His remains do not belong to us; they belong to the Embassy. We must have the Ambassador's instructions as to where to convey them. He was a diplomat; and we cannot send him to the morgue unless you don't care to give other instructions."

Welcheck feared the consequences of his outburst of temper; and it might have consequences if his chief heard of it. He thought a moment, and an idea struck him.

"Yes," said he, "the remains could be sent to the German Club close by. A *chapelle ardente* could be arranged. Beckert's wife in this way would not have to see the awful remains of her husband."

Welcheck's idea was at once accepted by Castor and Dr. Molina.

"I must stay here to collect the papers we may find which are not absolutely burnt," said Welcheck; and added, turning to Castor, "Would you mind sending some one to the Secretary of the Club asking him to come here? We can then arrange with him what to do."

CHAPTER XI

HAVING given the necessary orders Castor turned his attention to the Sanitary Police Inspector. He ordered the work to be resumed at once; his object, he told the inspector, being to find the body of Tapia, who he felt sure must have perished with Beckert.

Castor was convinced that if the body of Tapia were not found in the debris, he was either the actual murderer or an accomplice of the men of Caleu. If Tapia were not found, then a search must be instituted for him; his home searched; and a watch kept over it. A minute investigation must be made as to his character; his whole past life must be gone into, and a connecting link established between him and Caleu. Yes, thought Castor to himself, that for the present is the right road to follow, and we might start right away, for if Tapia is found here nothing will have been lost. If, on the other hand, he turns out to be a near relative of Contresas, then the case against him would be clear. Tapia was a retired Sergeant, a man of intelligence, probably a well-read man for his class, a man capable of hiding his crime by committing another, so as to burn all traces.

Castor asked to be excused for a few minutes and walked briskly out into the street, past the waiting ambulance. When near the corner of the street he stopped at the pillar telephone for the express use of the police. He unlocked the case, and took out the receiver.

"Put me on to Inspector Rojas; I am the chief; be quick!"

Answer came back sharp:

"Yes, Chief. Rojas speaking."

"Rojas, you must double your efforts to find Tapia; have his house searched and watched. Nobody must come in or go out without our knowledge. If you catch him, keep him. Telegraph to Valparaiso, Iquique, Concepcion, all over the country; get his photograph, reproduce it, have it printed and sent broadcast; there are reasons to think he may be connected with the Contresas of Caleu, who are now in prison—try that line as soon as possible. Wait for me at Headquarters; I will be back in about an hour or so. Good-bye."

He returned; and, joining Welcheck, found him in animated conversation in German with the Secretary of the Club.

"He won't believe that Beckert is dead," said Welcheck to him.

"Well," said Castor, "it looks mighty like it; but what have you decided? Are the remains to be taken to the Club?"

"Yes, the ambulance can wait until we arrange a room in which the remains can be deposited. I have asked Herr Hunspyr here to inform the Ambassador and to call up an undertaker."

"I hope," said Herr Hunspyr, "that the ambulance can wait until we can arrange the room fittingly to receive the Chancellor's body. He was a well-beloved gentleman; and his diplomatic position entitles him to still higher consideration."

"The ambulance is at your service for any time you may require it," answered Castor; "and now, gentlemen, I must go back." He turned and pointed to the room where Beckert had been found. "It is possible that Tapia's body is there also. I bid you good night."

"I must go with you, Señor Castor," said Welcheck, following, after a hurried good-bye to Herr Hunspyr.

The work had proceeded rapidly. In the room where the body was found it was easy to see the uselessness of continuing a search for Tapia's body.

Castor stepped into what had been the private office of Baron von Bodmann, and found the work advanced far enough to show that no body would be found there. In the other two rooms the inspection did not give better results.

By eleven o'clock, nothing further being found,

Castor was bidding Welcheck good night, when the baron asked him for assurance that no papers or anything in the debris would be removed or appropriated.

Castor then gave orders before the baron, strict orders to the effect that no one was to approach the building except with a written order from the Embassy, absolutely no one, not even the police.

"Now are you satisfied, Señor Baron?"

"I am not only satisfied, but grateful to you, Señor Castor; please accept my thanks."

"I am only doing my duty, Herr Baron. Good night; I have yet much to do."

"Good night, Señor Castor," replied Welcheck, and he turned his steps to make for the Ambassador's residence, where he was to acquaint his chief of the ghastly find that their investigations had brought forth.

As the two men parted, there stood in the near distance, watching what passed, a bearded man who seemed inquisitively interested in the smouldering ruins and in the coming and going of the officials.

CHAPTER XII

CASTOR hailed a cab and ordered it to drive to Headquarters—where he was due to confer with Chief Inspector Rojas of the Secret Service.

Ten minutes later he was sitting at his bureau, with Rojas facing him.

"Well, Rojas, what have you done? Have you any news?"

"No, Señor Castor, I have no news as yet. I have done everything suggested by you; and we have taken the usual precautions in these cases so that the criminal may not escape."

Castor emptied a bag which he had taken out of his pocket, on to the table.

"Here we have some objects for identification," he said; "put this down in writing:

1. *One gold wedding ring with inscription as follows: 'From N. L. to W. B.'*

There is no doubt it was Herr Beckert's. N. L. stands for Natalia Lopez his wife, to W. B., Wilhelm Beckert.

2. *One gold cigarette case initialled W. B.*

That is plainly Herr Beckert's.

3. *One gold watch initialled W. B.*
4. *One gold and platinum chain.*
5. *One gold cigar cutter, initialled W. B.*
6. *One pencil case.*
7. *Pair of gold links.*
8. *Four shirt studs, two gold, two metal.*
9. *Eight metal trouser buttons, stamped 'Sastrelia Alemana' (German tailors)*
10. *One pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses—glasses missing.*

That ends the inventory, and we can safely state they belonged to the Chancellor; but, in order to proceed according to regulations, you will tomorrow see that Mrs. Beckert identifies all these."

Rojas nodded: "Yes sir."

Castor then ran over the events of the evening. Rojas listened intently to every detail.

"May I ask," queried Rojas, "was the door of the office locked when the fire began?"

"Yes; the report says so."

"Was the key of the door found?" asked Rojas quickly.

"No; in fact I don't think any one looked for it specially."

"*If the door was locked I can prove to you a crime was committed.* It is impossible for a man

to be burnt to death in a room without his trying to get out. The body, you have said, was found at the usual place where Señor Beckert worked, which I understand was far away from the windows. A man in danger of death by fire would have met his death either by the door or by the windows, trying to get out or to obtain help from outside if he could not get out."

His chief nodded.

"Rojas, you are logical, and you are right. The poor man's head was literally broken open. It had two holes the size of a silver dollar clean cut out. The blows had shattered the skull. There was, as Dr. Molina said, half the skull missing. It must have been a brutal attack; and the blows must have been dealt with maniacal strength and viciousness."

"Would the first blows have killed him?"

"I tell you the brains must have squirted out with the first blow; with the second there is no possible doubt the man must have died within five seconds at the very outside."

"In what position was the body found?"

"Call for the photographs; they should be ready by now."

Rojas rang a bell and ordered the photographs to be brought. A few moments later they were presented to him on a tray. They were still

rolled up and moist. Rojas spread them out, and, after a careful scrutiny, remarked:

"The right arm seems extended upwards in the first photos, in the others the bones are by the side; how is this?"

"In the first photos all the debris had not been cleared, and the debris round about was holding up the dead man's arm in that position. All the photos were not taken at once. You see in this one," the Chief pointed to the last one taken, "the body is nearly a skeleton."

Rojas' face cleared.

"Oh! yes, I see, of course that explains all," he said aloud; but he said it absent-mindedly—he was thinking deeply.

Suddenly he roused.

"Chief," he said, "*the murder was committed at least three-quarters of an hour before the fire broke out!*"

"You are wrong, the Ambassador and Welcheck were there with Beckert at about eleven-forty, and the fire alarm was given at twelve noon, therefore, at the most, only twenty minutes elapsed between the Ambassador leaving him and his death."

"Then, pardon my saying so, I am speaking under the seal of official secrecy, the German Ambassador and Welcheck are either wrong about the

time they last saw Beckert, or they know more than it is healthy for them to know about this."

Castor laughed gently.

"Remember, Rojas, you are accusing the Ambassador of His Imperial and Royal Majesty the Kaiser, and his Secretary Baron Welcheck, of murder! no more! no less!"

"I can't help that, the murdered man's arm was extended upwards. When a man is killed instantly, like this man, the body collapses; the nerve centres cease to act; all the nerves become flabby, like a jelly. The man's arm when killed must absolutely and without the slightest doubt have fallen to his side or towards the floor. That arm could not have been in that position unless it had been propped up, immediately after his death, propped up until the stiffening of the body set in. This stiffening of dead bodies in a case like this, in midsummer, on a hot day, could not have taken less than three-quarters of an hour, not one minute less, two hours more likely."

"I follow your reasoning," said Castor, "which is as sound as ever; still, the Chancellor was subject to epileptic fits and if you can prove to me that he did not have one at the time, then and only then shall I take you seriously. Why could not the Chancellor have been sealing a letter? Why could not the sealing-wax have caught fire? Why could not Herr Beckert have fallen on the

floor in a fit with his arm extended upwards, and, having lost all control of his bodily action, have been burnt alive? The fire could have spread to the curtains and woodwork, the plaster could have fallen on him before actual death took place burying him to such an extent as to hold up the arm, which, being paralysed, remained in the position in which we see it in the photograph."

"Yes, Chief; all that is possible and even probable; but then, how do you account for the skull being broken to pieces? How do you account for the blows struck, in your own words, with 'maniacal strength and viciousness'?"

"My dear Inspector," answered Castor with jocose sternness; "am I in the prisoner's dock, and are you the prosecutor? I am being subjected to a very severe cross-examination." He laughed good-naturedly and continued, "I shall explain the fractures; they may be the result of falling timber or heavy building material. When we arrived on the scene all this had been cleared as well as the over-hanging structure which threatened to fall at any moment. On the other hand, the fracture may have been dealt by Tapia, let us say. Now the body was found by a man dealing a blow on the debris with a pick, which pierced the instep. Great strength had to be exerted to bring the pick out of the debris. As the body was not all consumed by fire, the liga-

ments of the bones still remaining, the strength exerted on the pick may, I don't say did, have changed the whole position of the body. If you drag a person by his feet, the arms, if slightly separated from the body and held by rubbish, mortar, laths, etc., would assume a different position. The right arm, in this case, might have been raised to the position we see it on the photograph."

"Yes, Chief," answered Rojas, rather disappointed; "of course your theory is possible. All that you say may have happened; and certain facts tend to corroborate your opinion."

Although Rojas was apparently satisfied, he was far from it. Castor's allusion to the prosecutor was not encouraging towards further discussion.

"We must see what to-morrow brings forth," said Castor; "good night. Have these articles identified tomorrow morning." He handed him the objects belonging to Beckert.

"Yes, sir, I shall see that it is done early; good night, sir!"

"Good night!"

"Yes," thought Rojas as he left Castor, "we must see what tomorrow brings forth. I can see it now, the arrest of Tapia and a month later his punishment—death. Poor fellow, if he did it to avenge his relatives for the insult to poor Maria I sincerely hope he may only get ten years. No;

that will be rather difficult with these damn Germans. Only to think of poor Contresas, and his son, makes one's blood boil. There is no hope for Tapia; not with these people. Of course they will want an indemnity from the Government for the dancer. Of course half a million francs for Mrs. Wilhelm Beckert! I don't think! Not if Herberto Rojas manages this case. I would love to put the blame on old von Bodmann, and the young dandy Welcheck, if only I could. If I can prove that the arm was extended upwards when Beckert was found it would show that the murder took place before they say it did. It looks suspicious to me; they acknowledge they saw him last anyway. The blows on the head show plainly enough that a murder took place. The old Chief, Castor, knows this; and all his explanations about hanging beams are pure nonsense; and he knows that too. He thinks Tapia killed him—Beckert. It looks very much like it; but then, if he did so he must have done it at about half-past ten. If I, Rojas, am right, the Ambassador and Welcheck are lying regarding the time they left Beckert. Why?"

Such were the thoughts in the mind of the Chief Inspector of the Secret Service as he retired to his rooms.

CHAPTER XIII

NEXT afternoon the evening edition of the leading Santiago newspaper "El Mercurio" announced in large print:

DEATH OF THE CHANCELLOR OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY
HERR WILHELM BECKERT BURNT TO DEATH

"This morning we were lucky enough to get an interview with His Excellency Baron von Bodmann, and to obtain his opinion as to the death of Herr Beckert.

"His Excellency told us that the Chancellor used to work in the second room from the street. In this room there was a very large fire-place where Herr Beckert often destroyed useless papers by setting fire to them. It is possible that yesterday he had a good quantity of papers to burn and whilst doing so the flames might have spread to the carpet or to a bookcase which was close to the fire-place.

"Without doubt the flames swiftly increased to such proportions that he intended running for help, but being subject to epileptic fits it is probable that the excitement brought one of these on,

which would account for his failure to save himself.

"After this explanation the Ambassador courteously dismissed us, saying that he was overwhelmed with work."

In another column the following news was given:

Inquest on the Body of Herr Beckert of the German Embassy

"At eleven o'clock this morning a coroner's inquest was held at the German Club.

"Amongst the first called was Mr. R. Brull, who lives in the house opposite to the German Embassy Offices. Mr. Brull stated that he saw that a fire had started and telephoned to the Fire Department. He then ran out to see if he could be of any help.

" 'Where did the fire begin?' he was asked by the President of the Court.

" 'The fire began at the Embassy Offices. I knocked at the door, and tried to open it. I heard nothing from the inside excepting the roaring of the flames and the crackling of burning furniture. The door was locked, the firemen found it necessary to break it open with axes. When this was done it was impossible to see anything inside; the smoke, flames and heat blinded every one near.'

"This ended Mr. Brull's evidence.

"Several witnesses were called who gave evidence as to the finding of the body and agreed with what we published in our morning edition.

"Señor Rojas of the Secret Police, when called, declared that the valuables found had all been identified as belonging to her husband by Mrs. Beckert, who was too ill to attend the inquiry. She stated that a diamond ring which Herr Beckert always wore was missing. Señor Rojas said the diamond ring was usually worn on the little finger of the left hand and from the fact that the wedding ring was found on the finger next to this it was possible that the ring might yet be found.

"Señor Castor declared that he and Baron Welcheck had that morning opened the safe and found it empty. According to the Baron, something like three hundred thousand dollars in notes and drafts on Buenos Ayres and Berlin were deposited in it the day before the fire. He said that an important witness, namely Tapia, a porter to the Embassy, was missing.

" 'Is it possible that the body of this man may yet be found in the debris?' enquired the Chairman.

" 'No, sir,' answered Castor, 'it is absolutely impossible; the whole place has been cleared up; not only the premises occupied by the Embassy but also those adjoining. In fact, the body has

been looked for in every place where there was any likelihood that it could be found. Up to the present the search has been fruitless. Not a trace of him. From enquiries made by our department we find that the man Tapia cashed a cheque signed by Herr Beckert on the day of the fire, at the Banco de Chile, for six hundred dollars. This was done at about nine-thirty in the morning. We have tried to find him at his house. His wife insists that he has not come back since he left home at seven a. m. the day of the fire. We have searched high and low, and have not found him.'

"Doctor Molina was then called; he declared that he, together with Doctor Grille, Municipal Doctor for the district in which the fire occurred, had examined the body. After a careful examination of the remains they found no wounds or traces of blows. The body was very nearly consumed by the fire. The head, arms and hands were absolutely charred, even the viscera, which in most such cases are preserved, were burnt nearly beyond recognition. Certainly, on the first examination at the scene of the fire, he thought that two large wounds had been inflicted on the back of the head. Dr. Grille and himself were now of opinion that there had been no such wounds. They thought that this had been caused by moving the body when buried by the debris, or by falling bricks or timber. They also agreed that only one-

tenth of the usual cerebral matter had been found in the head.'

" 'Was the head broken open?' asked the Chairman of the Jury.

" 'Yes, sir.'

" 'Can you say with absolute certainty that no blow was struck on the head whilst the person was alive?'

" 'The body,' answered Dr. Molina, 'is so badly burnt, so very badly burnt, that it is impossible to make that statement; still, from all visible signs we are of opinion that no blow was struck. I should add, the frontal teeth are missing, but the roots exist. These may also have fallen when the body was moved, or have been destroyed by something heavy falling on them. The slightest touch would destroy them.' Asked about other injuries, he replied: 'One leg is broken just below the knee; this may have been caused, taking into consideration the state of calcination, by any one walking over the body whilst excavating.'

"The Chairman then summed up; the jury retired and in a few minutes the coroner gave his verdict as follows:

" 'That the Chancellor of the German Embassy had been found dead, and presumably through the agency of Tapia.'

"This ended the proceedings."

THE WHISPERING DEAD

Under still another heading appeared the following:

Official Condolences to the German Ambassador

"This afternoon, shortly before three, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Señor Negro, and one of the Aides-de-Camp, representing the President, visited the German Ambassador and tendered their condolences for the untimely end of Herr Beckert."

CHAPTER XIV

CASTOR and Rojas drove together to police Headquarters. Arrived at Castor's office, Rojas rang the bell and asked for Sergeant Pera.

A few moments later the Sergeant stepped in and saluted.

"Well, what news?" asked Rojas.

"Following your instructions, sir, at seven o'clock this morning I left here to call on Mrs. Tapia; she lives in a district which is not familiar to me. At the corner of Avenida Italia and Santa Isabel I stepped into a grocer's shop and asked the owner if he knew Tapia and where I could find him. He answered that he lived around the corner in Jelvez Court. In answer to my further enquiries, the man said he had known Tapia for ten years; that he never drank, was very kind-hearted, and paid his account at the shop every Saturday night punctually. He was a most methodical man; and gave his wife all his wages. Seven months ago he bought a small corner lot, and built a tiny three-roomed house, his great ambition being to establish himself in the front room as proprietor, manager, and shop-assistant all in

one, of a dry-goods business in a very small way. He saved every penny towards the accomplishment of his great dream. I was told that Tapia is thoroughly honest, and bears as good a character as possible."

Rojas nodded. "So far, character good. Well?"

"I then went to Jelvez Court," continued the Sergeant. "I had to show my disc to get near, as one of your men, Señor Castor, stopped me. When I got to the house the door was opened by Mrs. Tapia. She is about twenty-nine or thirty; a good-looking, harmless, good-hearted woman. I told her I had come on behalf of a newspaper to learn something about her and her husband. I offered my services to her, and asked her if I could be of any help. Whilst I had been talking to her, I was standing between the door and a white deal shop counter. She stepped forward and lifted the flap, and asked me to come right in and offered me a chair. The poor woman was sobbing continually and looked heartbroken.

" 'I came to ask you a few questions,' said I; 'do not be afraid, no possible harm can come to you.'

"The poor woman did not answer, her eyes were downcast, and she seemed sunk in a kind of stupor, the result of that fatalism with which some people accept the most terrible vicissitudes of life.

" 'What was your maiden name?' I asked.

" 'Bienvenida Salgado.'

" 'How long have you been married?'

" 'Seven years.'

" 'Have you any children?'

" 'Two; the elder, Gilberto, is four years old; and the little one, Hilda Flor, one and a half years."

" 'Was your husband good to you?'

" 'Oh! yes, sir; very good indeed.'

" 'Did he ever beat you?'

" 'Beat me?' she exclaimed; 'he never once raised his voice to me.'

" 'Is it true that every month he used to hand over his salary to you?'

" 'Yes, sir; every month.'

" 'Was your husband of a mild disposition?'

" 'He was the best husband living, gentle as a lamb.'

" 'Do you know that some people are of opinion that your husband had something to do with the death of Herr Beckert?'

" 'That is impossible,' she answered indignantly; 'my husband could never, never have committed such a crime. Why, he was the kindest-hearted person alive, and would not have harmed a fly. He never got into bad company; he used to spend his evenings at home, working on the shop we were going to have. You see, sir,

we had already finished the counter, and we were making the shelves to put the goods on. I don't believe my husband is hiding from the police, because when he came home the night before last, he told me he might have to accompany Mr. Beckert on a long journey, but he did not know when they were going to start.'

" 'Do you expect him to turn up, then?'

" 'I hope so, sir, but all the others think he has run away. He'll come back, be sure, sir; he'll want to finish the shop so that we can make enough money, so that we can send the children to a good school and have them well educated. Then Gilberto will succeed his father in the business, which by then will be a big concern. Yes, sir; very big. Oh! he will come back, sir; have no doubts about it.'

"It was grand to see the faith the poor woman had in her husband, and in the success of their business enterprise, which consisted so far of a white deal counter and a few deal boards, which later were to be turned into shelves for dry goods.

" 'Did Tapia say how long he was to be away?' I asked.

" 'He was told by Herr Beckert that he was going to send him on a long journey; that is all he said; I know no more.'

"With this I left Mrs. Tapia and went to the Gazadores Barracks to look up the record of

Tapia. He joined the army when eleven years of age as bugle-boy and served for eighteen years. His sheet is clean. A 1, in fact. All his comrades spoke very highly of him, so did the officers."

Sergeant Pera finished speaking, and stood at attention.

"Very good, Sergeant Pera," said Castor; "you may retire."

The man saluted and marched from the room.

When they were alone Castor said:

"Rojas, I don't know what to make out of this. Every report is favourable to Tapia. If it were not for those six hundred dollars he cashed at the bank, seven thousand more gone from the safe, and over two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in bills, without counting the diamond ring, I would be inclined to think him innocent; but against our reports as to his character we have his disappearance, with nearly three hundred thousand dollars and a diamond ring. Now we must weigh both sides of the question. In my opinion three hundred thousand dollars is for a man like Tapia an enormous fortune. Suppose Tapia hoped to get to Argentine and efface himself, change name, and disappear completely. Two years later he writes to his wife to join him, if he has not arranged that already. With three hun-

dred thousand dollars and his thrift he would be a very rich man. His dreams would be realized beyond his wildest hopes; what think you?"

"I agree with you, sir; I had thought of vengeance; I had thought of a great many other things; but the three hundred thousand dollars put an entirely different complexion on the case. Yes, sir; we must find Tapia; he must be the guilty one."

"Have you still no news of him?"

"No, sir, but he can't get away; the police at all the mountain passes to Argentine have been told to keep a strict watch. The Argentine police have promised to help us in this. All the seaports are under surveillance. Every boat leaving will be thoroughly examined. He is as safe as if he were in San Pablo prison already."

"We must see what else we can do, and await development," said Castor.

Rojas signed agreement; and replied:

"I went this morning to the scene of the fire. Baron Welcheck was there, with two other Germans, sorting out half-burnt papers. I made a thorough examination of the room, and found a hammer and a stiletto. Both, most likely, have been used on the dead man, as on microscopical inspection they still contain a substance which could not have been on them had they been used

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only for opening letters or hammering nails. I have kept them, as they may be useful for the reconstitution of the crime."

"The more evidence we have the better," said Castor with a finality that put an end to the conversation.

CHAPTER XV

THE next day at four o'clock a funeral service was held at the Deutsche Evangelishe Kirche situated in Calle Santo Domingo No. 1825; after which the remains of Herr Beckert were taken to the Protestant Cemetery.

The principal mourners were Baron von Bodmann and Baron Welcheck. The Chilean Minister for Foreign Affairs also attended, the President being represented by one of his Aides-de-Camp, all the diplomatic corps *en masse*, and nearly all the German residents. A second hearse followed the one conducting the body, carrying an enormous quantity of wreaths and floral tributes.

Before lowering the body into its final resting-place, Baron von Bodmann delivered the eulogy:

"Gentlemen, when a little over a year ago His Majesty the Emperor entrusted to me the direction of this Embassy, I little thought I should have to fulfil the sad duty of accompanying one of the members of the staff to his last resting-place. Deeply moved by the sudden and terrible tragedy which has brought a most promising career to an untimely end, I find myself here with you to bid

our friend a last adieu. But before committing to our mother earth these mortal remains I wish to say a few words about the excellent employee and conspicuous collaborator whose death fills me with unspeakable sorrow. The Fatherland will remember with heartfelt gratitude one who died in the accomplishment of his duty, a victim to the traitorous knife of a cowardly assassin. In the annals of the Embassy the dastardly attack shall be written in letter of bronze. Yes, although he was a faithful servant of His Imperial Majesty he loved Chile with the same love which he had for his Fatherland. He loved his wife to idolatry and his only thought was for her welfare. The deceased was a man full of noble sentiments and with the kindest of hearts. He could never see any one suffer, and all those who knew him could but love him. In this solemn moment, gentlemen, I must declare that our late idealist and enthusiastic friend was not capable of a foul action, and I can declare this with firm conviction as I had many occasions to study and prove the nobility of his soul. May he find in heaven what he so much desired on earth—Rest and Peace."

The body was then solemnly lowered into the grave; and the mourners moved off quietly to leave the cemetery.

Baron von Bodmann, Baron Welcheck, and a nephew of Beckert's were the last to leave. As

they were nearing the gates of the cemetery Herr Hunspyr approached them, and, bowing low to the Ambassador, held out a thick letter, and announced in a low funereal tone:

"Excellency, I was charged some time ago by Herr Beckert to give this letter to your Excellency if he died suddenly or mysteriously, after his burial was over. I now comply with his wishes."

The Ambassador took the envelope, and, formally thanking Herr Hunspyr, placed it in his coat pocket. As he turned to leave he added, "It is not usual to receive letters from the dead," and walked gravely to his carriage.

The Ambassador was intrigued by this incident; he wanted to open the letter whilst driving home; he tried to read the address on the envelope, but could not do so owing to the vibration and his short-sightedness.

As soon as he had arrived at his residence, however, he went into his bureau, sat down, opened the letter, and read as follows:

Kaiserliche Deutsche Gesandshaft
in Chile.
October 31*st*, 1908.

My most respected Ambassador—

For several weeks past I have had the presentiment that the threats made to me by several Chileans will be realized sooner or later.

Herr Baron von Bodmann, you have laughed at my presentiments; maybe you are right; maybe they are ridiculous; but if they are, if these forebodings of death are only the result of overwrought nerves caused by the anonymous letters I have continually received, then this letter will not reach your hand.

I calculate that when you come into possession of this letter, I shall be a dead man.

The last wishes of one who is going to enter the shadows of the valley of death are sacred. But for your Excellency they should not be sacred, they are only a most earnest supplication in the hope that they may be heard.

I have lived nineteen years in South America, fifteen of which I have spent in Chile. Chile is for me my second Fatherland, and therefore I love Chile; but notwithstanding this affection I remain a German in the fullest sense of the word.

I have spent in this country the happiest hours of my life—also the bitterest, but these one forgets.

It is infinitely painful to me to think that my death might cause my second Fatherland a serious conflict.

Added to this thought there is the no less worrying one of the uncertain future of my wife and my young nephew whom I have adopted as my son.

In the letter which I enclose for His Excellency the President of the Republic of Chile, I believe I have found the means of avoiding any possible conflict. I desire that your Excellency should place this letter in the hands of His Excellency Don Pedro Montt, President of the Republic of Chile.

This wish from one who has ceased to exist may seem inconceivable to you, yet it is the wish of one whose last days have been embittered not only by the presentiment of death, but also by the pre-occupation caused by the problematical future of his beloved ones.

I thank you for complying with my wishes and for your kind and generous conduct towards me.

W. Beckert.

"Poor Beckert, poor man!" thought His Excellency sadly; "from this I gather that he has left his widow penniless. A sad state of affairs indeed!" He sighed.

He sat deep in thought for several minutes. Suddenly he got up and paced the room to and fro, his eyes bright with new thought.

"*Ach*," he thought, "Beckert was more foreseeing than I had given him credit for. Of course the letter to Señor Montt contains a request for a pension or something very much like it for Frau

Beckert and the young nephew. If the President and the Government grant it at his request, well and good. All conflicts are avoided, as he says; but if they don't, then we must exert a little influence, a little persuasion, and if this is not enough, a little pressure. Let me see, Beckert might, I don't think he would, but who knows? yes, he *might* have reached the position of Ambassador to the Court of Saint James. Our Ambassador in England gets ten thousand pounds a year; he might not have been able to reach such heights. Let us say that after twenty years he was pensioned off as Chargé d'Affaires in some small country. He would then get, let us say, eight hundred pounds a year. Chile is a rich country, a generous country, a small country. Señor Montt is a clever man, a very clever man indeed. He knows only too well that Germany's wishes must be acceded to. He knows that non-compliance with a request for an indemnity to Frau Beckert for the murder of her husband might bring no light consequences to his country. At the same time Señor Montt is scrupulously careful with the Government finances. We must name a figure not too large, not too small, and below the average between Ambassador and Chargé d'Affaires. Let us say two thousand pounds yearly, to be paid to Frau Beckert during her lifetime. Poor woman! what a dreadful

tragedy in a life so young! I will write her a note telling her that her future is assured, that tomorrow I shall see the President and demand an indemnity of two thousand pounds a year as compensation for the foul murder of her husband. She can count on this with absolute certainty, and I shall tell her so."

Baron von Bodmann was a man of action. He sat at his desk, wrote the note, and sent it by hand. He also wrote another to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, asking for an audience with the President for three o'clock next day.

. . . . . .

As Mrs. Beckert sat in her lovely drawing-room that night, a beautiful centre to the handsome surroundings about her, she held the Ambassador's letter in her slender fingers. As she brushed the tears from her eyes with her handkerchief, she started in an agony of apprehension. She stared at the window; gradually her terror departed. She must have been overwrought—she could have vowed that a bearded face was peering at her out of the darkness of the night. After awhile she shrugged her pretty shoulders. Perhaps some police agent was guarding the house!

The fair-bearded fellow, however, withdrawing into the darkness of the night, was a thick-set and solid apparition enough. He seemed satisfied

with his peep into Beckert's home, and took his way serenely to the scene of the Embassy fire, and stood in the moonlight gazing at the ruins for a long time. The mystery seemed to have intrigued the man; but he kept his conclusions to himself; and relapsed again into the darkness.

CHAPTER XVI

AT five minutes to three a carriage stopped in front of the Presidential Residence, the "Moneda," a beautiful edifice begun by the Spaniards towards the end of the sixteenth century. Baron Welcheck stepped out of the carriage, followed by His Excellency the German Ambassador.

They entered the wide portals, where they were met by an officer who conducted them through the "patio" in which trees of all climes gave a pleasant and welcome shade in the hot summer day.

Arrived at the President's quarters, they were asked to sit down whilst the officer communicated with the President's Aide-de-Camp, who hurried off to announce their arrival.

A couple of minutes later the German Ambassador was ushered into the President's room, Welcheck waiting in the ante-room.

Señor Montt was sitting at a large mahogany writing-table. He had apparently just finished dictating some letters to his secretary.

On the entrance of the German Emperor's

Representative he left the table, and with a pleasant smile on his lips advanced to meet him.

Don Pedro Montt was in his sixty-sixth year, his complexion was dark, so much so that in the country he had the sobriquet of "El Negro Montt," as distinctive from all the rest of the family. His close-cut white hair, his mild and generous grey eyes, and his large nose, accentuated a very determined bearing. He was not handsome, but one glance at his face impressed one with his intelligence, honesty of purpose, sincerity, and patient determination.

He shook hands cordially with the Ambassador, saying in fluent French, the diplomatic language:

"Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, I am indeed pleased to see you; your visit gives me the opportunity to offer you my sincere condolences. I have given special instruction to spare no effort to capture the criminal; he shall be dealt with as he deserves."

"I thank your Excellency," replied the Baron. "I must apologize, Monsieur le President, for taking up your time with an unofficial visit. Strange to say, I have come here at the request of Herr Beckert. He had expected that he would be assassinated. Some time ago, foreseeing his untimely end, he had written a letter which he gave to the keeping of a friend of his, to be de-

livered to me after his death. Yesterday I was handed the letter, which expressed a last wish asking me to deliver into your own hands this envelope."

The Ambassador handed the letter to Señor Montt, adding:

"I am anxious to know the contents, for when this letter was written Beckert was in a very nervous state of mind."

"Let us be seated, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur," and Señor Montt, leading Von Bodmann towards a large sofa covered with old aubusson tapestry.

Asking the Ambassador to excuse him, Señor Montt opened the letter. He scanned it rapidly, and as he proceeded his features assumed an imperceptible look of indignation. When he had finished he tendered the letter to Von Bodmann, and said:

"Would your Excellency care to read it?"

"Thank you," replied the Ambassador, and, taking it, read:

Kaiserliche Deutsche Gesandshaft,
Santiago,
October 31st, 1908.

Señor Presidente, I am German by birth and affection, I am Chilean by the deep love I have for Chile, where I have resided for fifteen years,

and where I have passed the happiest days of my life.

I have fallen a victim to the blind fury of illusionists. I forgive them and earnestly beg of your Excellency to see that my death does not embitter still more the condition of the perpetrators of the uncalled-for assault I suffered at Caleu. If justice overtakes my assassins, may my pardon be a shield to them and their ignorance their defence. I must suppose that in assassinating me they thought they were fulfilling their duty to those wretches of Caleu.

My death is not their worst crime. No, the hours of suffering and anguish which for weeks and weeks I have endured like a man condemned to death, have been a torture far worse than their crime. Yes, for I have an absolutely certain presentiment that sooner or later I shall fall by their hands.

I leave, Excellent Sir, a widow and a nephew in a precarious situation. I have not been able to make money. I lived on the salary my Government paid me.

To your Excellency's benevolence I recommend the two beings I most loved on earth. Chilean generosity will know how to provide them with the necessaries and comforts of life when the source, which procured them, has been stopped by

Chilean hands. In this way all the difficulties which through my death may arise between the Chilean Government and the Imperial Government will be obviated.

I have been continually worried with the fear that a disagreement might arise between the two Governments through this foolish crime committed by irresponsibles, who think that by sacrificing me they are liberating their 'brothers' from Caleu. May God forbid it!

If I had known who were the authors of all the anonymous letters which during so many weeks held my life as by a thread, I should have written to them that their contentions were foolish and absurd.

It seems strange and ridiculous that one should urge one's wish from 'ultra tumba' (beyond the grave), but the presentiment of my death has instilled into my being the absolute certainty of it. If this letter comes into your Excellency's hands, then my presentiment did not err. Then my words will not sound strange and ridiculous.

I would await with sincerity and tranquillity the moment when the assassin's dagger enters my heart, knew I only that it would not cause worry to the German Ambassador, whom I esteem and revere, nor alarm and occasion bitter moments in my second Fatherland, Chile.

That your Excellency be very happy always and Chile prosperous and strong, I desire with all my soul.

W. Beckert,
Chancellor of the German Embassy
in Chili.

Von Bodmann sighed as he finished reading the letter; it was a deep sigh. One would have thought at the moment that the letter was from his own son, so deep was his apparent grief.

"It is a sad ending to a brilliant career," he said at last.

"It is indeed, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur."

"Yes, Monsieur le President, and most sad for his poor young wife and nephew."

"It is very regrettable, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur."

"His wife and nephew, as he says, are left in very straitened circumstances, Monsieur le President."

The President's grey eyes lit up keenly as he asked in steady reply:

"Are you sure, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur? Did he not have his life insured?"

"No, Monsieur le President, no; he only had his salary. He leaves nothing at all. If Beckert had been a rich man he would not have been afraid to die. No, had he known the means of

subsistence for his beloved ones were assured he would not have written this letter."

"He should," answered Señor Montt, "knowing our institutions, have deposited money in the Government's Savings Bank; he could have got eight per cent for his money yearly. Besides, all the profits of the Bank are divided amongst the depositors and often yield to them ten and twelve per cent."

Baron von Bodmann knew of the President's hobby.

"But he did not avail himself of the Bank," he interrupted, "and now he is past doing it; his widow's position is awful."

The President shook his head sadly.

"What want of foresight!" he said. "Very sad, but surely your Excellency's Government will grant the poor widow a pension!"

"I am afraid not, Monsieur le President. He was not long enough a Government official. No pensions are granted before ten years' continuous service."

"Too bad, too bad," muttered Señor Montt. But his shrewd grey eyes were watching the pompous Ambassador of Germany very closely, as the German played his next card.

"May I ask what the Chilean Government intend doing regarding the petition contained in Herr Beckert's letter?" asked the Ambassador.

"I do not know, Excellency, what the Government have to do with it. Herr Beckert's letter is a petition to me personally, as you said. I am a poor man; I myself cannot help him; besides, he was a German, his Government or maybe you yourself might help him. I never knew Herr Beckert, I don't think I saw him more than twice and that at official receptions. His letter to me, a most unaccountable one, must have been written in a fit of great depression."

"Monsieur le President, his petition is directed to you as Head of the Nation, as Head of the Government."

The President's voice hardened.

"It may be or may not be," answered Señor Montt; "that does not remove the fact that he is a German and not a Chilean. How can my Government give largesse to foreigners and besides to our own people?"

"I might answer that, M. le President, by saying that the Government is answerable for the safety of the inhabitants, be they Chileans or foreigners."

The President bowed.

"Our laws are such that they extend full protection to all inhabitants, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur. Well; what do you propose?"

"I should think that a pension of two thousand pounds a year to Frau Beckert from the Chilean

Government would be a just and equitable settlement. It is the salary that Herr Beckert would shortly have had. He had a very brilliant career to which to look forward. In two years he might possibly have had five thousand pounds a year."

The Ambassador said this with aplomb; he did not even blush. He knew he was lying. So did Señor Montt.

A ghost of a grim smile of contempt played about the President's lips.

"So that is your opinion!" he said.

"Yes, Monsieur le President."

"I am glad to hear it," returned the President abruptly. He had risen. His face was passive and smiling, as if the proposition pleased him. His blood was boiling with indignation; but, notwithstanding, he stood there smiling, silently awaiting the departure of his unwelcome visitor.

"May I hope," asked the Baron, "that the just aspirations which I have put before Monsieur le President on behalf of Frau Beckert will be satisfied?"

"Monsieur l'Ambassador, your demands are so unexpected, so sudden, that I have not even now got over my surprise. I can therefore give no opinion. This is a matter for mature consideration. I shall speak to the Minister for Foreign Affairs about the matter. He will know how to deal with it. That is all I can say."

The President led the way towards the door of the anteroom and, when reaching the door, knocked very gently on it; it was immediately opened from the other side.

Baron von Bodmann had never before been shown the door. He understood that his project had failed and that an official claim would have to be filed. He became angry, and, turning towards the President, said:

"I thank you for your kind reception. I shall, as you suggest, present a claim to the Minister for Foreign Affairs."

"As *I* suggested?" The President's voice was hard with contempt.

The German Ambassador had served his country too long to feel shame.

"Yes, M. le President, good afternoon," he said, holding out his hand, which the President scarcely touched.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN the door closed on the German Ambassador, Señor Montt went to his writing-table and pressed a button.

His Secretary instantly appeared. "Call Señor Balma," said Montt, "tell him to be so good as to come here, I would like to see him at once."

"Yes, sir."

Señor Montt sat down to his bureau, leaned his elbow on the table, and rested his chin on the palm of his hand. He occasionally brushed his hand back over the close-cut white hair of his noble head. It was a habit when he was in any way displeased. He sat deep in thought until Señor Balma coughed lightly to make him aware of his presence.

The President looked up.

"Ah, Don Rafael, good afternoon!" said Don Pedro affably; "sit down there! now what do you think Von Bodmann asked that audience for?"

Balma sat down and answered without great interest:

"I could not say, Don Pedro."

"Don Rafael, my friend," said the President in an affectionate tone of voice, which as he proceeded turned low, hard, charged with anger, "in all my experience as a diplomat, an experience of which I have had a good many years, and in all my experiences as a politician, I have never been asked to accede to such preposterous demands as those made to me by that man"; the President nodded towards the door by which "that man" had made his exit. "No, never had I imagined that the representative of a great country like Germany would stoop to blackmailing. It seems incredible, Don Rafael; but—you see this letter? Read it!"

Señor Balma took the letter and read it slowly through. He flung it down with contempt.

"This is blackmail in every sense of the word," he said. "This is a canting, begging letter, written by a hypocrite who intends to extort money."

"I agree fully with you," said Don Pedro, "but what do you think *he* did?" nodding to the door again. "I will tell you. He began whining over the death of the Chancellor; then showed me that letter, expecting me at once to propose to him what he thought would be an *amende honorable* in the shape of a pension for Señora Beckert. *Amende honorable* for what? As I did not propose it he drew a picture of the poverty into which the nephew also, mind you, would have to sink!

Then he falsely stated to me that Beckert was not insured. Curiously enough, this morning I met Señor Salas, who is a Director of the Chilean Consolidada Insurance Company, in which I hold some shares; and he told me that *Beckert insured his life only two months ago for sixty thousand dollars*, that they had not reinsured yet, and that the loss was a big one."

The Foreign Minister nodded. "I see," said he.

The President's voice was now the voice of the accuser.

"Well, that man," nodding again towards the door, "asserted categorically twice to me that Beckert was not insured, and at last asked me what I intended to do. I said I would refer the matter to the Foreign Office, to you; for that letter had been so unexpected, that I could not decide anything; besides it was not for me to decide, but for you. He then said he would, *following my suggestion!* present a claim to the Foreign Office! . . . Lying again. To shield himself, in case Berlin should not quite agree, he had brought Welcheck, who was in the anteroom, with the door open, to be a witness that I had proposed his representing a claim." He uttered an exclamation of contempt: "Pah! these Germans have no sense of honour!"

Balma replied with cold deliberate voice, as a

judge condemns the guilty: "Señor don Pedro, this is incredible! It passes belief that a man like Von Bodmann, whom we thought a straightforward and clean diplomat, would stoop so low for such an unimportant and trivial affair. Intentionally to misunderstand your meaning is bad diplomacy. He forgets he was addressing the Head of the State. To paint a widow as poverty stricken when she is to receive sixty thousand dollars within two or three days is worse diplomacy still. To make false statements which will come to light within two or three days is worse diplomacy still. To make false statements which will come to light within forty-eight hours is worse than all."

"But, Don Rafael, my friend," said the President, "you do not know the amount of his claim. What do you think of two thousand pounds a year for life?"

The Foreign Minister laughed contemptuously.

"Señor President, he must have taken leave of his senses. Beckert's salary was a miserable one for his position. He only had eight hundred pounds a year; on what can such a claim be based?"

"On his brilliant career and still more brilliant future," answered Don Pedro, smiling.

"Nonsense! I beg your Excellency's pardon, but must say, nonsense!" Don Rafael was

laughing as at a farce. "And I assure you, Don Pedro, that the refusal I shall give to his claim will be emphatic, very emphatic."

"Well," said Don Pedro, "tell Perez, who is the bookworm in your department, to try and find, if he can, similar claims and the results. Von Bodmann must have had some precedent in his mind when he came here. Perez knows the world's history as if he had lived through it personally."

"Yes, Perez is marvellous," replied Señor Balma, rising from his seat, "and if you will permit, I shall retire."

"Certainly, but have a careful note taken of our conversation, we may have to refer to it later in reference to our rights and honour against that ——" he was going to say bully, but again nodded towards the door and said "man."

Two days later the claim was presented to the Foreign Office; it demanded an annuity, payable by the Chilean Government for life, to Mrs. Wilhelm Beckert, in quarterly instalments of five hundred pounds each.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE Chief of Police and his head of the Secret Service were again closeted together.

"So you still persist with your ridiculous idea about Von Bodmann and Welcheck?" Castor chuckled to himself.

Rojas looked angrily at the Chief.

"At any rate, Chief; if the dead man is Beckert, they could not have seen Beckert as late as they say they did, for the simple reason that he was then dead. I insist that my theory about the dead man, whosoever he may be, is right; and that the upwardly extended arm could not possibly have been in that position if Bodmann and Welcheck really saw him alive twenty minutes before the fire began and the dead man be Beckert. I repeat and assert that it is impossible. I have consulted two good doctors and they both agree with me. The stiffening would not have had time to set in. That is absolute."

"But did you ask them about a case like this, subject to epileptic fits, or may be in a cataleptic condition?" retorted Castor.

"I do not believe in fits, or conditions as you

call them, cataleptic, epileptic, or otherwise. I maintain that the two blows which were dealt with the hammer on the back of the man's head, blows which broke the skull clean through, as a bullet goes through a glass, must have knocked the nerve centres to bits. After these blows, the nerves ceased to exist as controllable nerves. After these blows they lost all life, and became merely organic matter, subject to physical laws of gravitation. Immediately after and for some time after the blows were struck the body and limbs were warm, no stiffening would set in until long afterwards. Yes, Señor Castor, that arm had to fall down, did fall down. Therefore I hold that as to the murdered man being alive so late, His Excellency the German Ambassador and Baron Welcheck are not telling us the truth, if the murdered man be Beckert."

"That is all sound, Rojas; but you forget that the body may have been dragged where found, as I said before, which would alter the position of the arm," rejoined Castor.

Rojas shook his head.

"I have consulted with Doctor Molina, and as he made the autopsy he ought to know," answered Rojas. "Doctor Molina is of my opinion; and that is that the remains were consumed by the fire quite enough to destroy all resiliency and cohesive power in the ligaments of the limbs ex-

cepting in the lower extremities of the legs which were apparently covered with falling plaster from the ceiling before the rest of the body. The trunk of the body, arms, and head were burnt more intensely. The ligaments were more or less destroyed and brittle. If the body were dragged by the legs, as you suggest, the remains would have separated at the hips. Even if this had not happened the arm would have remained in its original position, that is to say, horizontally, lying on the body or on the floor. The arm was embedded with the rest of the body in plaster, dust, cinders, etc. If the body had been dragged the arm would have separated from the body as the ligaments connecting it to the shoulder had lost all cohesive power."

"Yes," said Castor, looking at the matter from the point of view so forcibly unfolded to him by Rojas. "Yes; and the arm being embedded, as you suggest and as it certainly was, in a cast of plaster, dust, and cinders, caked hard with the water that had been poured over it by the engine, the theory that the arm could have changed position falls to the ground."

Castor himself, having given the most logical reason against his own theory, was pleased. In changing his views he now took upon himself the honour of having furnished the final argument. He knew that Rojas was clever. But Rojas had

not been able to clinch the point as he had.

Rojas was clever, so much so that he did not say, "I told you so." He wanted to clear the case. He wanted his chief to look at it from his own point of view, and he succeeded with his next words:

"*Caramba!* Señor Castor," he said, striking his forehead with the palm of his open hand, as though to denounce his stupidity, "I never thought about that, never. It never entered this poor head of mine. And so simple! but simple things are always the most difficult," he said, catching himself up. "You have settled this point once and for all."

"Yes," said Castor gloomily; "we have settled a point which instead of throwing light on the subject makes it darker than ever. The Ambassador and Welcheck both state in their depositions that they left the offices between eleven-twenty and eleven forty-five in the morning. They state also, with equal assurance, that they left Beckert alive and well at that time; we cannot doubt the German Ambassador's words, nor Baron von Welcheck's."

Ten years have elapsed since Castor gave forth this unassailable decision. One wonders whether Señor Castor would have made the same statement today! Rojas at least had come to other conclusions even ten years ago.

"I don't know about that," said Rojas. "The trouble is that I cannot find any other motive than robbery. A robbery of sixty thousand dollars is not big enough for either the Ambassador or Welcheck. Welcheck is rich, very rich; his income is ten thousand pounds a year; he doesn't gamble. Welcheck would not do it for robbery; that's plain. I do not know so much about Von Bodmann; he is relatively poor; has only his salary. But, no; I can't imagine the old man doing it; no, his position would forbid it; besides, they were both together, and the young fellow would not have allowed it anyway, not for money, that is certain."

"Yes; that is certain," agreed Castor drily.

"I don't know," returned Rojas. "Now what if Beckert had threatened to divulge some of their dirty work! what if Beckert had demanded an increase in salary or hush-money for secrets which he might divulge! Would they not have attempted it for the honour of their Fatherland? They are capable of anything in that case."

Castor nodded.

"In that case, yes! At any rate, you might give instructions to have them watched," said Castor; "it will do no harm."

Rojas at once left the room and gave the necessary orders, and returned:

"We lose nothing by knowing their movements," he said.

Castor swept the whole theory aside with his hand.

"No, no; you are on the wrong track," said Castor; "you forget Tapia; we must account for him before laying the blame at any one else's door."

"*Caramba!* Señor Castor, you are always right," said Rojas, and added gloomily, "but that man has disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him. Here we are, four days after the double crime of fire and murder, and not a trace of him."

"Are you sure he has not escaped to Argentine?"

"Absolutely, Señor Castor; I receive hourly reports from all the Andes passes, and no man has crossed the Cordilleras even resembling him. He is not in Santiago. If he were, my people would have found him before now. He has not communicated with his wife either by word of mouth or by letter. All her correspondence has been subject to strict censorship; he has not written to her. I think I shall go and see her myself; I may get something out of her; she might make some slip which may give us a clue."

Castor sighed wearily. He was baffled. He arose and said:

"I think the idea is good, and the sooner it is

carried out the better; the papers are already beginning their stale old joke about appointing an eye specialist to the Secret Service," added Castor laughingly.

Rojas growled:

"As the papers aren't on this job, it is easy for them to criticize; well, I am off to see Mrs. Tapia at once; good-bye."

"Good-bye, and good luck!" said Castor.

CHAPTER XIX

BIENVENIDA TAPIA, in a sad, dreary, mechanical way, as one tired of life, was putting her children to bed. The poor woman's thoughts were despondent indeed. Her future was black, and held not a single ray of hope. All her dreams of a grand education for her children, of prosperity to come through dint of economy and hard work, seemed to have been swept away. All this was hard to bear; harder still to bear under the hideous suspicions heaped on her dear husband. He, the soul of honour, the best man that ever lived, falsely accused of the worst possible crime. It was heartbreaking to the poor devoted wife. Every moment her eyes filled with tears. It was difficult for her to maintain a composed countenance when little Gilberto would ask again and again, "Mammy, when is Daddy coming back?"

In her heart she felt convinced that her husband was not the perpetrator of the foul crime. In her heart of hearts she hoped still to see him return. Her eyes unconsciously turned towards the door, her ears straining at every passing footstep.

She made Gilberto kneel on the bed to say his prayers. The little chap, crossing himself, mumbled through Our Lord's Prayer, and added with child-like confidence: "Dear Jesus, do bring Daddy back, because I want him very much, please."

Bienvenida, kneeling on the floor, her elbows resting on the little bed, buried her head in the pillow. Her body shook convulsively as she sobbed silently. She prayed to God with all the strength of her soul to bring her husband back. Little Gilberto, seeing his mother crying pitifully, began crying also. His prayer had ended; but he added, "Please do, dear Jesus, because Mammy also wants him, and she is very sad."

Bienvenida Tapia lifted up to God her tear-stained face in one last appealing mute prayer; then embraced her child tightly, her face against his face, their tears mingling in their fall on the spotless cotton sheets.

"My darling, I have no one left but you," she said gently, "now you must go to sleep."

She put out the light and stepped into the kitchen to prepare her supper. She had not been occupied many moments when she heard some one stop at the front door; her heart gave a jump, she felt faint for a second with unacknowledged expectations. She stood where she was, not daring to go to the door. Unconsciously she had been

hoping against hope that some mysterious reason had detained her husband and that some day he would return and make it all clear. In moments of sober reason, she thought that he must be lying dead under the ruins of the burned Embassy, himself reduced to ashes; it is true that the police . . .

A knock came at the door. Bienvenida trembled violently; she shrank from dispelling her illusions by opening the door; then she suddenly rushed forward, pulled the door open, and was face to face with a soldier of the Cazadores; but the uniform was not enough to deceive her, for whereas Tapia was small and thin, the soldier who obscured the doorway was tall and heavily built. Her disappointment was terrible.

Again her eyes flooded with hot tears.

CHAPTER XX

AS Bienvenida stared bewildered through her tears at the figure of the soldier against the dark night, "*Burenas noches*, Señora," said he; "I heard of your misfortune, and I thought I would come around and see if I could do anything for you in these sad straits. I am an old friend of Tapia's. We were good friends for ten years until he got married."

"*Entre pues, amigo*," murmured Mrs. Tapia sadly, "Step in, friend"; and she led the way past the counter into the kitchen.

"Sit down," she said, as she pulled up a chair to the white deal table in the centre of the room for her visitor. She sat down in another one, and silently covered her eyes with her handkerchief.

The soldier waited a few moments to allow her to compose herself. He broke the silence abruptly, saying in a mild voice:

"And have you no news of your husband?"

"None at all," she answered.

"I have heard so many stories, I don't know what to think," said the soldier; "some said he was going on an expedition with the German

gentleman and had not returned; others said he was blamed for the fire at the Embassy and that he had run away. I know better though; I've known him for ten years."

"What! have you heard of him? Is he alive? Tell me, please." She leaned forward eagerly.

"No, I have not heard from him; I don't know whether he is alive or not; I only said I knew him very well, that's all."

"If you know him so well, you must know he could have done nothing wrong."

"Yes; that is what all the boys at the barracks say; they never thought he would have the pluck to do it."

"He never did it," she cried indignantly; "I swear by the Virgin Mary he did not."

"That's what I told them," said the soldier; "and when we were talking it over I proposed we should get up a subscription for you, as we thought you might be hard up. We collected two hundred and six dollars, and here they are."

He pulled out a roll of money, mostly composed of one dollar notes and some silver, from which we see that our friend Rojas was not a man to be trapped by bungling with small trifles. If he had brought two one-hundred-dollar notes, Mrs. Tapia would have certainly wondered. In this way she was satisfied that it had been a collection, every man giving his little bit.

Rojas shoved the money across the table towards Mrs. Tapia. The poor woman looked at it, but did not touch it.

"I don't know whether I ought to accept it," she said; "I am very hard up and the temptation is great. I wonder what he would have liked me to do?"

"He would have said, take it for the children," answered Rojas.

"I will take it; and when he comes back, if he is not dead, we shall repay it," she said; and added, "Thank you very much for doing this for me, you are a friend indeed to think of me."

"Don't mention it, I am your husband's best friend; and I want to clear his good name; and I want you to help me to find him or to solve this mystery; I tell you I have absolute faith he did nothing wrong."

"How can I help you?" she asked anxiously.

"Had he acquired any vices since he left the regiment?" he asked suddenly.

"How can you say such a thing when he was the best man, the most honourable man, that ever breathed?" she answered hotly.

"I only wanted to make sure; you see people talk a lot," the soldier answered. "Was he going on a journey with the German gentlemen?"

"He said something about it, but he did not know when they were going to start. If they had

intended to go, he would certainly have come back for a bag and clean linen."

"Then what do you think has happened to him?" asked the soldier bluntly. He was watching her every mood keenly.

The poor woman again put her handkerchief to her eyes, as if to shield them from some terrible sight. She remained so for several minutes. At last Rojas gently broke the silence:

"I would like to know what you think, because I myself think that he has been a victim of some accident."

"Of that I am sure," she broke in vehemently. "He would have been back before now if nothing had happened to him?"

"Yes, yes," Rojas asked quickly; "but what do you think has happened to him?"

"I fear to say it, but I believe he must have died in trying to save Señor Beckert from the fire." She spoke with difficulty.

"Then you think his body should be found where the fire took place?" he asked gently.

"Yes," she sobbed.

Rojas shook his head:

"We had a man from the secret police at the barracks and he said that only one body was found, and that it was the body of the German gentleman."

"How could he tell?" she broke in. "I was

told the body was not recognizable, so how could they know it was not my poor husband?"

"Well; they only found one body."

"Oh, yes!" she said with indignation, "Oh, yes! because we are poor they lay the blame on Tapia; because they found only one body they accuse my poor husband of all sorts of horrible things; and at the same time they can't tell whose body it is."

Rojas started. "Good God!" He leant forward with quick eagerness and added: "*Could you identify the body?*"

He was keeping control of an intense excitement.

She remained silent a long time, as if seeking an inspiration, her pretty black eyes turned upwards towards the electric light above the table, in a fixed stare. Rojas gripped his patience. It seemed as if she were never going to answer.

At last she muttered suddenly:

"Yes; I think I could."

"What?" Rojas jumped up from his seat. He leaned over the table towards her, and asked excitedly: "You could make sure of the body! How?"

"By his teeth," she said calmly with a simplicity that carried conviction.

"What! You could be sure?" he asked keenly.

"My husband had very perfect teeth," she said simply. "He had only once in his life been to a dentist; and then only had a back tooth taken out. The teeth could not have been burnt, because they do not burn; so I am sure I could recognize him."

"You've got it," exclaimed Rojas. He struck his fist on the table excitedly. "Yes, you have got it. . . .*Caramba!* . . . I congratulate you; you are clever than——" he stopped. In his excitement he had nearly forgotten that he was posing as an old soldier friend of Mrs. Tapia's husband.

The woman gazed at the man and his excited state, dumbfounded.

"I have got it! what do you mean? What have I got?" she asked, bewildered.

Rojas came back to earth:

"The idea; the solution of the problem. I will tell my Lieutenant to mention this idea to the police, so that your husband's name will be cleared of all guilt. They will now be able to identify the body with certainty." And he added, somewhat enigmatically: "Good God! we never even thought of this! Yes; the simple things are the most difficult."

Bienvenida Tapia's eyes filled with tears, and she fell a-weeping.

The man came out of his own thinking, touched

her kindly on the shoulder, and said gently: "Hush! don't grieve—Tapia's good name is saved."

"If it is my darling that they find, my doom is sealed," she sobbed. "Sorrow, helplessness, poverty are my future and the lot of my little ones."

"That shall not be," answered the soldier hotly. "I have some friends in high places, who will see to it that you do not want; I promise."

He sat down again; and for a few minutes longer asked her about her children and comforted her as best he could, whilst his whole being urged his going. After assuring her that he would call again as soon as he was able to get a day off, he at last bade her "good night!" and was gone.

CHAPTER XXI

AS soon as Rojas was well out of Jelvez Court, he hailed a cab, and was driven to his private residence whence, after a quick change of clothes, he sallied forth. He now went whistling a gay tune, his head high in the air; he was at last full of confidence. He felt sure that he was on the right track. "Yes," thought he, "now I can see it as clear as daylight. Of course I was right. The right arm of the dead man could not have been pointing towards heaven unless the murder took place long before old Von Bodmann and Welcheck pretended it did. . . . Oh, yes; we shall now see who is the cleverest detective in Chile. Yes; I shall send off on the sly a pair of those eyeglasses offered by the press to Castor. But Castor is sure to take all the honour; of course he is the Chief, and the top nobs are those that get the credit. I wonder how he will take the news?"

He was a happy man as he wondered what special recommendation would be accorded to him by the Government.

He was in the highest of spirits as he knocked at the door of Castor's office at headquarters;

and, walking in, he found his Chief sitting at his bureau with a mass of papers in front of him.

"Well," said Castor, "you have a smiling face; I suppose you have laid your hands on Tapia!"

"Yes and no, Chief," answered Rojas. "I know where Tapia is at any rate; but we cannot arrest him."

"Do you mean the man has sought refuge at the German Embassy?"

Rojas laughed a dry laugh.

"Not exactly, Chief; but how near you get! He has been all this time, ever since the murder was committed, under the special protection of the German Embassy and the most distinguished German residents; in fact they have kept a strict watch over him." Rojas burst out laughing.

"What do you mean?" broke in Castor sternly; "explain yourself!"

Rojas could not immediately subdue his laughter at what he saw was a huge if grim joke; but seeing his Chief worried he said:

"Señor Castor, all the honours paid to Señor Beckert's remains, the grand service at the Evangelist Church, the enormous cortège, the beautiful speeches, the gorgeous flowers and wreaths, the presidential condolences and the rest of it, all these were paid in homage to the mortal remains of a really good and worthy man, Tapia. *I feel convinced that the body we found was Tapia's.*"

"What—do you—say?" stammered Castor, incredulously.

"I say, sir, that Tapia was the person buried and not Beckert. My theory is right. The arm, as shown on the photographs, belonged to a body which had been dead an hour at least before the fire took place. Beckert was alive twenty minutes before the fire broke out; so it could not have been his body. And if it was not his, it was Tapia's."

"You must prove that," replied Castor.

"I can and will prove it," said Rojas.

"How?"

"Have the body exhumed. Tapia had excellent teeth, not a single filling and only one extracted. If the teeth of the dead man agree with my declaration, then we arrive at the certain conclusion that it was Tapia who received all the pomp and honour of an official and diplomatic funeral."

"How do you know all this about Tapia's teeth?"

"I have been to see Mrs. Tapia; and I have obtained the information personally from her. It cost me, or rather the service, two hundred odd dollars."

"It is worth it," said Castor; then swinging round in his chair he added: "but please tell me, Inspector, where then is Herr Beckert?"

"Ah! That, for the moment, I cannot pretend to tell," answered Rojas, his brows contracting in a puzzled look: "I have thought about it, and can find no reasonable answer to the question." And he added: "Chief; it may seem absurd, but *why should we not be looking for Beckert instead of for Tapia?*"

Castor's shoulders shrugged.

"Do you mean to accuse Herr Beckert, Chancellor of the German Embassy, of murder?" he asked. "No, no, a man in his position is above suspicion. Come, Rojas, you are death on the German Embassy; you'll be suspecting the Embassy cat next."

"Let us suppose, then," said Rojas, quite unruffled, "that Herr Beckert had one of his epileptic fits in some obscure corner of Santiago and still continues in an epileptic condition. He has not been found because the place where he had the fit is so obscure and so little frequented that no one had approached it. For argument's sake let us leave him there. Now, as only one body was found where there should have been two; and as this one body has not been identified in person as it was unrecognizable; why should it not have been Tapia's?"

"Simply because Tapia would not be wearing Beckert's jewellery," said Castor triumphantly.

"Against that very just objection I lay before

you my side of the question: this man was murdered *before eleven* in the morning on the day of the fire, the position of the arm proves that beyond doubt; therefore if Bodmann's and Welcheck's evidence is to be believed—and you say you believe it—*it could not have been Herr Beckert's* body as he was alive after that time."

Castor nodded.

"We have arrived at an impasse," said Castor. "We are in a blind alley."

Rojas took quick advantage of his Chief's bewilderment:

"Let us get out of it by looking at the body," said he.

"We cannot have the body exhumed unless we show the most powerful reasons," said Castor.

"What more powerful reason than the one before us? Tapia is not to be found. I guarantee that he has not got out of the country; and yet we cannot lay hands on him. The body was not properly identified. The position of the arm alone should be reason enough."

"I shall speak to the Judge about it, and if he agrees, he will order the exhumation of the body. We shall leave it at that," replied Castor.

"Will you see the Judge soon?"

"In about an hour's time when I have finished with these papers." Castor nodded to the pile of correspondence on the desk.

"Every moment is precious now," said Rojas, stressing each of his words.

"I know that; and the sooner I finish this, the sooner I shall see the Judge."

With this mild hint Rojas had to be satisfied; at once he turned and left his Chief alone.

CHAPTER XXII

THE order was given by the Judge for the exhumation of the body. The body was unburied that same evening, and taken to the School of Medicine, where the examination of the remains was to take place.

As a courtesy to the German Ambassador, two German doctors were appointed by the Judge to make the examination of the remains that night: Doctor Westenhoeffer, specially engaged in Chile by the Chilean Government as a professor of Autopsies to teach at the Santiago School of Medicine, and Doctor Aichel, a German practitioner.

Next morning at ten o'clock the Judge arrived at the School of Medicine, accompanied by two Chilean Doctors acting on behalf of the Government, as the laws of the country demanded.

As the Judge passed through the waiting-room adjoining the room where the autopsy had been made by the German doctors, he saw sitting on either side of a table strewn with papers, Natalia Beckert and Bienvenida Tapia, who had both been called by the authorities to identify the body.

Mrs. Beckert, dressed in deep mourning, her beautiful face very pale, bore traces of great grief

and sleepless nights. At nine in the evening of the day before, she had been notified that her presence would be required next morning to identify the remains of her husband. She had been told that some doubt had arisen as to the real identity of the person buried and that the body would be exhumed that same evening. As she had not identified the body at the inquest she was called upon to do so now.

The summons shocked her sense of decorum and of the respect she considered as due to her husband. *Requiescat in pace* had been the last words of the Evangelist Minister, officiating at the burial; and now the rest and peace of the poor body had been disturbed. All the proceedings seemed to her absurd, monstrous. To have her husband identified a second time seemed a useless desecration. She saw no object in this; the possibility of the exhumed body not being that of her husband was beyond her wildest imagination. She dreaded the ordeal she was to go through within a few minutes; she shuddered at the thought, and looked for sympathy at the woman sitting on the other side of the table.

Poor Mrs. Tapia. Her comely face betrayed the greatest anxiety. Her poor heart was full of contradictory emotions. If she identified the body her last hope, slight indeed, but still a tiny ray of hope, of future happiness would be gone for

ever. If she did not identify the body, then her husband had either deserted her or he had really committed a crime; and such a hideous idea could find no echo in her mind. She would not admit it even as possible.

The Judge and the doctors passed into the other room.

An attendant opened the door of the dreaded room where the remains were laid out, and stepping up to Mrs. Beckert, asked her to follow him. She turned deadly pale, her limbs trembled under her, but she mastered her emotion with an effort and followed him. As she crossed the threshold, she saw the Judge sitting at a table surrounded by several men whom she did not know. On a table with a marble top she caught sight of the ghastly shapeless mass. She closed her eyes and swayed. Before she could fall Doctor Grille had caught her and carried her to an easy chair.

This painful business had been foreseen, and restoratives were administered. She soon recovered consciousness, and burst into hysterical sobbing.

The Judge approached her; and taking hold of her hand, patted it gently.

"Poor child," he said, "try to control yourself; this is very trying indeed, but it must be gone through. We shall endeavour to make the proceedings as short as possible."

The words, spoken in a voice, mild, gentle, and full of sympathy, were soothing to her in her terrible distress. She pressed his hand in mute acknowledgment of his kindness.

"I shall try," she answered.

On the marble table, lying on its side was the skull, bare, not a particle of skin covering it; beside it lay the lower part of the jaw. Further back a shapeless brown mass, which the doctors said was the trunk of the body, lay with the arms and legs.

Mrs. Beckert was asked to look at these gruesome remains and to say if she could identify them as belonging to her husband. She glanced at them and turned away.

"How awful, how terrible!" she exclaimed. "I can't. Let me go away!"

"My child, calm yourself," said the Judge. "Please look at the jaws, can you identify the teeth?"

She controlled herself with a great effort and, concentrating all her strength, looked. She remained staring at the jaws for several moments, then turning away, said:

"It is impossible for me to say that I can recognize anything. This is too terrible."

"You must have one more look at the body, please," said the Judge. "Do you think you could recognize your husband?"

Again she steeled herself and looked at the gruesome sight for a few moments.

"Oh no, I can't" she murmured, and swooned away once more.

"Enough," said the Judge; "please carry her out and administer your restoratives; poor girl, how she must have suffered in this terrible scene!" He looked towards the table.

Mrs. Beckert was carried out; and Mrs. Tapia was called in.

CHAPTER XXIII

BIENVENIDA TAPIA, attired in the traditional manto, a Spanish inheritance, entered the mortuary chamber.

The manto, of rich black silk embroidered with flowers, covered her head and was gathered in tightly at the neck, and fell in graceful folds, hiding and at the same time revealing her well-developed figure.

With the stolidness of the Araucanian, the original inhabitants of Chile, whose blood ran in her veins with that of her Spanish ancestors, she glanced at the rich coffin which rested on the opposite side of the room from where the marble table stood. She paled slightly notwithstanding the show of unconcern.

She thought for a moment she would be shown a body seemingly asleep.

As she knew she was there to identify it, she made a step towards the coffin, then stopped short. She did not dare approach; she stood perplexed, her heart beating intensely, her brain a great confusion. She felt stunned; the decisive moment had arrived.

The Judge advanced to her.

"You are Mrs. Tapia," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"You have said you could recognize your husband by his teeth though mutilated and burnt?"

"Yes, sir."

"You must be strong because the sight you will witness is terrible. Do you think you feel up to it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Please come this way," said the Judge.

Her surprise was great; instead of being asked to step up to the coffin she was led in the opposite direction.

She saw several gentlemen observing her, and then her glance fell on the table where the remains were laid.

She clutched the arm of the Judge, who winced as he felt her fingers and nails tighten on his arm. She had seen, and stopped short, closing her eyes.

"Calm yourself," said the Judge, removing her hand from his arm and retaining it in his own hand.

"Doctor Grille," he said, "will you bring the teeth for identification?"

Doctor Grille, with a surgeon's *sang-froid*, took from the table the skull in one hand and the lower jaw in the other, and presented them to the horrified eyes of Mrs. Tapia.

One glance at the teeth was enough. She heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"The teeth are not those of my husband," she said.

"Could you swear to it?"

"Si, Señor; por la Virgin."

"You swear by the Virgin Mary that these are not your husband's teeth?"

"Yes, sir, I swear his teeth were perfect," she said, turning away from Doctor Grille and his revolting exhibits.

"That will do," said the Judge; "thank you very much; you are a brave woman." He himself led her to the door.

CHAPTER XXIV

WHEN Mrs. Tapia had passed out, the Judge shut the door and, turning to the doctors, said: "We have not advanced any further after all this trouble. Doctor Westenhoeffer and Doctor Aichel, have you a written report on the autopsy carried out by yourself?"

"Not yet, sir; but we can give you verbally the result of our examination," answered Westenhoeffer.

"What is your opinion?"

Doctor Westenhoeffer went to the table in the centre of the room and took up some papers. He had put down notes at which he occasionally glanced, and commenced:

"Doctor Aichel and myself began the examination of the body last night at ten o'clock, after having consulted His Excellency Baron von Bodmann as to whether we should undertake it. We both agree that the remains which we have here are those of Herr Beckert. Besides, all the proofs already in the hands of the police are to the same effect. We have discovered, stuck in the left-hand side, which is the side on which the body

must have been resting, and in the region of the fifth rib, this piece of cloth."

He held up to view of those present a piece of linen which had certainly belonged to a shirt, with red and blue stripes. It was about four inches wide by six inches in length.

"This cloth and the body were of the same colour when we separated it and was soaked in what must have been blood. We examined it microscopically and found it to be so. After washing, it resumed its present appearance. We have had it identified this morning by Frau Beckert; she recognized it as part of the shirt Herr Beckert was wearing on the day he met his death. On further examination we have found that the heart was penetrated to the extent of two inches by a wound inflicted with a stiletto or other thin, sharp instrument. The skull had been perforated by two blows struck with terrible force with a hammer, as you see by your own observation."

He took up the skull and with a slow sweeping gesture showed it to them all.

"We have been able to ascertain that the blows on the head did not produce death instantaneously. Death was due to the wound in the heart, the amount of blood shed shows this. The time that elapsed between the infliction of the wounds on the head and the one in the heart must have been very short; indeed, so short that we are of

opinion that more than one person committed the crime, although it is within the bounds of possibility that it may have been committed by only one person. We have examined the teeth. From a declaration made last night to the police by Mrs. Beckert it would appear that Herr Beckert had several teeth filled with gold. If you will examine the jaws"—he held them up for inspection—"you will see that the front teeth have been broken, maybe through the heat produced by the fire, maybe through some heavy object falling on them. Both the top and lower front teeth are missing. You will also remark that on this side of the jaw the back teeth are in position and that they are apparently sound, but on the other side all the back teeth, both top and bottom, are gone, and only the roots of the decayed ones are to be seen, as the heat of the fire must have caused the filling to fall out and the decayed parts to crumble. We have also further evidence to place before you. Frau Beckert, on being questioned by us, informed us that Herr Beckert had broken his leg below the knee in a hunting accident about four years ago. We have examined the bones of the legs and found, as you can see for yourself, one of them broken below the knee on the exact spot indicated by Frau Beckert. All this conclusive proof will be detailed in my report which I hope to be able to submit this evening."

"I would beg of you to submit it as soon as possible," said the Judge, "so that Doctor Grille and his friend here may corroborate your statements on behalf of the Government."

With these parting injunctions the Judge rose and took his leave, followed by Castor and Rojas.

"May I ask when the body will be buried?" enquired Rojas, as they passed out of hearing of the Germans.

"Not until tomorrow in any case. We must now obtain authority to bury; and this will take some time," answered Castor, glancing at the Judge.

"Yes," said the Judge, smiling, "but not as long as it has taken you to find Tapia."

"If you will excuse me," said Rojas, "I will take my leave."

He bowed to the Judge and to Castor, and touching his hat he left them to continue their walk.

As soon as they had turned the corner of the street, Rojas at once called a cab and asked the driver to take him to Mrs. Beckert's house.

CHAPTER XXV

ROJAS was not beaten yet. Oho! so the *German doctors, then, had had an interview with Von Bodmann at two in the night before the autopsy;* why? Had the Ambassador ordered them, in case they found any evidence to prove that the body was not Beckert's, to pass over it? The blow would now be great for the German Embassy if by any chance a doubt remained that the body was not that of the Chancellor. If it were not, then the crime had been committed by him. Why had the doctors been at such pains to examine the blood microscopically on the cloth and washed the cloth so that it should be identified by Mrs. Beckert? Why had they not examined the teeth microscopically as well? They knew that the examination had been ordered principally to examine the teeth; yet they had cursorily dismissed the most important evidence with words such as "apparently" and "you can see for yourselves." This did not satisfy Rojas at all. He would get to the bottom of all this, and very soon. In this train of thought he arrived at Mrs. Beckert's residence, got out, and asked the cab to wait.

He was ushered into the drawing-room, where he found Mrs. Beckert reclining on a couch, in her hand a handkerchief wet with recent tears, and on a small table beside her a bottle of smelling-salts.

The poor woman had not yet recovered from the effects of the ordeal.

"Señora Beckert," broke in Rojas at once, "I have come to ask you if you can tell me the name of the dentist who attended your husband."

"Dennis Lay," she answered wearily.

"Thank you very much, Señora, I hope you will soon get over the terrible experience you went through this morning. I see you have not yet recovered; I shall take my leave. *Adios* Señora."

"*Adios*, Señor," replied Mrs. Beckert dreamily.

Rojas stepped into the waiting cab and asked to be driven to Mr. Lay's dental surgery. The distance was not great; and in a few minutes he arrived at the Lower Alameda.

Asking the driver again to wait, he knocked at Number 2778. It seemed ages before the door was opened and the servant appeared.

"Mr. Dennis Lay?" he asked.

"He is out of town."

"Where?"

"He has gone to Melipilla."

"*Caramba!*" said Rojas, bitterly disappointed;

then suddenly added, "When do you expect him back?"

"We don't know; he is on his holidays."

"*We* don't know! who are *we*?"

"Señor Villareal and myself."

"Who is Señor Villareal?"

"He works with Mr. Lay and has done so for years."

"Ah! Good! Can I see him?"

"Certainly; this way, please."

Rojas was ushered into the usual dentist's ante-torture-chamber, and was asked to take a seat. Fortunately Señor Villareal was disengaged. The door of the consulting-room opened, and the dentist stepped in.

"Good afternoon, doctor," said Rojas; "I am Inspector Rojas of the Secret Service. I have reasons to think that Herr Wilhelm Beckert has been a patient of Mr. Lay."

"To what year do you refer?"

"Say 1907."

"My dear sir, if he has been attended here, we will easily find all the information you can want. Every bit of work done for our patients is always minutely written down with the record of their work done and the charges for the same. Mr. Beckert, you said? Let us look."

Señor Villareal opened a large book at its index, and under the letter "B" found the name "Beck-

ert, Wilhelm," folio forty-six, page forty-six; he read as follows:

"*April 16th*, 1906. *Señor W. Beckert.*"

"Nothing minute about this," said Rojas.

"Wait a moment," said the dentist, and read on:

"*May 17th*, 1906. *Señor W. Beckert, five extractions with gas*, $50.

"*June 11th*, 1906. *Señor W. Beckert, two gold fillings*, $40.

"*June 18th*, 1906. *Señor W. Beckert, two platinum fillings*, $60.

"*June 21st*, 1906. *Señor W. Beckert, one platinum filling*, $35.

"*July 1st*, 1906. *Señor W. Beckert, one large platinum filling on nerveless tooth and one gold crown*, $75."

Rojas nodded.

"Can you say, doctor, on what side of the jaws these fillings were made?"

"Five extractions and nine fillings are fourteen operations; they must have been on both sides," said the dentist.

"Thank you very much; I must now be going." Rojas took up his hat.

"Can you tell me what you want all this information for?" enquired Señor Villareal.

"I am sorry, Señor, I can't for the moment say a word; but you will soon hear. Good-bye."

Rojas was ushered out by the servant who had admitted him; and got into the cab.

It was half-past twelve; he could do nothing for an hour, everybody would be lunching; he felt hungry himself. He consulted a pocket directory and ordered the cab to drive him to the Restaurant Santiago. This was the nearest restaurant to the place to which he wanted to go afterwards.

When he arrived at the restaurant he paid off the cabby, and entered. He sat down at a table and ordered what for a Chilean would be a light lunch: a cold partridge, a couple of fried eggs and bacon, a steak and fried potatoes, and dessert, with a quart bottle of Chilean claret and some fruit. And he watched the hands of the clock feverishly.

CHAPTER XXVI

PRECISELY at two o'clock Rojas knocked at the door of Señor Valenzuela, Head of the School of Dentistry.

A neat little maid appeared.

"Is the doctor at home?" asked Rojas.

"Yes, sir."

"Will you please give him my card, and tell him I want to see him on a most urgent matter."

"Yes, sir; will you step this way, please? Are you a patient?"

"Oh, no."

"Will you come this way, then?" she said, leading the way to the drawing-room, where she left him.

A few minutes later Doctor Valenzuela entered the room and asked Rojas what he wanted to see him about.

"I have to apologize, doctor, for intruding and taking up your time; but I thought that your knowledge of dentistry might save the honour and good name of a poor woman and her children."

"How so?"

"Let me explain. Of course you have seen in

the papers the death of Chancellor Beckert of the German Embassy and that the assassin Tapia is not to be found?"

"Yes; but what has this to do with the honour and good name of a woman?"

"Very much indeed. The woman and her children are Tapia's wife and sons. They are victims of the most infamous plot concocted by the German Ambassador and Doctors Westenhoeffer and Aichel."

"Impossible."

"Exactly. Impossible! Everyone says the same. It rests with you to prove that it is not impossible. It rests with you, with your science and experience, to clear the name of a poor woman. You can clear her and her children from the infamy of a false accusation which without you they will have to bear to their dying day."

"But how can I do this?"

"Did you know that the body of Herr Beckert has been exhumed?"

"No, I did not; why has this been done?"

"Because Tapia is not to be found; and Mrs. Tapia said she could recognize him by his teeth. Well, she did not do so. She was too shocked. She saw nothing; but we know for a certainty that Tapia had all his teeth except one, and that Beckert had five extractions and nine fillings."

"Do the German doctors know this?"

"I don't think so; but the exhumation was ordered with the exclusive object of identifying the teeth, and they have not even looked at them. It is a German plot."

"How can you make such an accusation? What ground have you for calling all this a German plot?"

"Yesterday evening, before carrying out the autopsy, Doctors Westenhoeffer and Aichel had a long consultation with the Ambassador. After this interview they undertook the autopsy. At two o'clock this morning they had a second interview with the Ambassador. They proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the body is Herr Beckert's! They proved it by a piece of linen which they found stuck to the back and by a broken leg."

"I should think that this is enough proof after all the evidence already published in the papers," said Doctor Valenzuela.

"Yet they did not touch upon the most important and capital point, the teeth."

"They had enough evidence without them," said the doctor.

"There you are wrong, doctor; they had more evidence than they liked with them. Think of the tremendous blow to the reputation of German diplomatists in case the body found were not Herr Beckert's, but Tapia's; Beckert is missing; if Tapia is dead, Beckert is the assassin. I

maintain that the Ambassador instructed the German doctors to prove that the body was Beckert's."

"It is incredible," said Doctor Valenzuela.

"Yes, it may seem incredible; but in our profession," said the detective, "we look for clues amongst the fantastic."

"Let me think a moment," said Doctor Valenzuela.

Rojas saw he had interested the famous dentist, and remained quietly expectant. The doctor took two or three turns up and down the room. He sudenly stopped in front of Rojas and said:

"How old was Tapia?"

"Twenty-eight."

"And Beckert?"

"Thirty-eight or thirty-nine."

"The doctors should certainly have examined the teeth," said Valenzuela.

"That is my opinion," said Rojas.

"How many teeth are there left in the jaws?"

"About six in the upper and lower jaw on one side of the face. The others are destroyed to the roots."

"That will be plenty for an examination," said Valenzuela.

"They intend to bury the body tonight or tomorrow morning," said Rojas anxiously.

"I see; you want me to examine the teeth?"

queried the doctor; "have you secured the necessary authority?"

"No, sir; I did not want to apply for it without having your consent first. No one knows or even suspects that I am following this clue, or that I am here with you. The result of your examination will be the greatest blow ever dealt to these German savants that the Government engages to teach at our Universities."

This thrust at the German doctors was diplomatic, and had the desired effect. It had already been rumoured that a German would shortly be engaged to take Señor Valenzuela's post as Head of the School of Dentistry. Rojas knew this; so did Valenzuela.

"I will consent to undertake the examination if you obtain the authority for me to do so," he said.

"It is late, already nearly three; if we take a cab together we might go direct to Castor, and thence to the Judge, and obtain the permission," said Rojas.

"I don't know," said Valenzuela dubiously; "I think I would rather you went alone."

"But, doctor, if I don't find them at once, valuable time will be lost. The order for burial may be given at any moment; it may already be signed. Think of Mrs. Tapia. Please accompany me out of pity for her; think of the infamy she may undeservedly have to bear for a lifetime."

"If you put it in that light I shall go; but I don't understand yet on what you base your suspicion that the body is not Herr Beckert's."

"If you will come along I will give you so much evidence that you will be convinced, as I am, that the body is not Herr Beckert's," said Rojas, leading the way to the door. The doctor followed. They entered the cab and drove off together.

On the way Rojas explained to the doctor his theory of the uplifted arm. The doctor was satisfied with the explanation, but added that it was only a theory. "Infinitely more evidence has been brought forth to prove the body to be Beckert's but still I shall go on with the examination," said the doctor. "I certainly think Doctor Westenhoeffer should have made a detailed and thorough examination of the teeth, as the difference between those of a person twenty-eight years of age and of forty is as plain to see as the difference between a child of five and one ten years old."

"You surprise me, doctor."

"It is so."

"This tends to confirm my opinion of a German plot," said Rojas jubilantly. "Here we are at Headquarters," he added; "will you come in?"

"No; I shall wait here in the cab."

Rojas dashed out of the cab into the office and asked if Señor Castor were visible; he was told he

had gone out and had left no word as to when he would be back. He came back rather crestfallen; and, getting into the cab, asked to be driven to the Tribunals, or Criminal Courts. As the driver whipped up the horse, Rojas turned to the doctor.

"Castor is not there," he explained. "We must get this authority immediately. I would suggest that you accompany me at my interview with the Judge; if you do, I am certain we shall get the order."

"I will do as you like. I have gone too far now to back out," answered Doctor Valenzuela.

CHAPTER XXVII

ROJAS and the doctor arrived at the Courts and were at once admitted. Twenty minutes afterwards Rojas came out again, followed by Doctor Valenzuela. His face was beaming; the permit was in his pocket. They quickly reached the School of Medicine, and asked to see Doctor Westenhoeffer or Doctor Aichel.

It was four o'clock; the lectures were just finished and the German doctor Westenhoeffer received them in his private study.

A look of surprise and anxiety overclouded the German's face as he saw Doctor Valenzuela enter, accompanied by Rojas.

"What can I do for you, Herr Valenzuela?" said he, in a mild mellifluous voice. "It is a pleasure to see you here."

"We have come," broke in Rojas, "to carry out the orders of the Judge to examine the teeth and jaws of Herr Beckert."

"Does this man speak the truth?" asked Westenhoeffer, with official German insolence, turning pale.

"Yes, doctor," answered Valenzuela calmly.

Rojas was furious; he burst out angrily:

"'*This man*' will show you the Judge's order asking you to allow every facility and to render all the assistance required by Doctor Valenzuela. Here! read this!"

He drew the order out of his pocket and held it out to the German doctor roughly.

Doctor Westenhoeffer took it. He scanned it quickly; was silent a few seconds; then remarked lamely:

"Doctor Valenzuela, to begin with, this is not according to professional etiquette."

"Etiquette has nothing to do with it," said Rojas; he smiled grimly, and turning from Valenzuela, added: "Doctor Valenzuela has been ordered by the Judge to make this examination; and if he does not do it I shall arrest him."

"Excuse me, Mr. Policeman," said Westenhoeffer angrily, "I was addressing Herr Valenzuela, not you."

Valenzuela intervened calmly:

"Doctor Westenhoeffer, I have been ordered by the Judge to make this examination; and the sooner I make it the better. I have no other alternative. Will you please let me have the skull and lower jaw? I will take them to the School of Dentistry, where I can best carry out my orders."

"I cannot give them to you," replied the German; "I also have orders from the Ambassador; I was ordered by him to carry out the autopsy."

Rojas and the doctor let the fact that the German was in Chile, not in Germany, pass them by.

"Yet you gave your report this morning!" said Rojas.

"Only verbally."

"You refuse to comply with the order before you?" asked Rojas.

"Yes."

"Because of your Ambassador's orders?"

"Yes."

"I will soon settle that," said Rojas.

He stepped up to the desk and took up the telephone.

"Give me Alameda 495," he spoke into the receiver.

"What are you doing?" asked Westenhoeffer hoarsely, stepping up to Rojas.

"Telephoning."

"Put down that instrument at once. How dare you?"

He went up to Rojas in a threatening attitude, his face livid with anger.

"You can't bully *me*. Don't you touch me," said Rojas as Doctor Westenhoeffer attempted to snatch the telephone from him. "Stop it or you will regret it!" he added significantly; and, still holding the receiver to his ear with his left hand, he held Doctor Westenhoeffer at bay with his right.

"Hallo! is that the German Embassy?"

There was a guttural reply in the hollow of the phone. Rojas answered:

"Yes? I would like to speak with the Ambassador. I am Inspector Rojas of the Secret Service. It is an urgent and important matter."

"I am Baron Welcheck. I shall communicate your message to the Ambassador," came the answer.

"I am with Doctor Valenzuela at the School of Medicine. Doctor Valenzuela has been ordered by the Judge to carry out an examination of Herr Beckert's remains. Doctor Westenhoeffer opposes it, although we have shown him the Judge's order. He says he has orders from the Ambassador that do not allow him to comply with the commands of the Chilean authorities."

Answer came quickly:

"Will you hold the line a moment?"

"Certainly," answered Rojas.

As soon as the conversation on the telephone had begun Doctor Westenhoeffer had given up his attempt at interference. Doctor Valenzuela, looking at a well-known picture entitled, "The Diagnosis," seemed utterly unconcerned at the result of the altercation between the two men.

"Hallo! yes?"

Rojas listened attentively for a few moments

and then asked Westenhoeffer to take up the receiver.

"They wish to speak to you," he said.

Westenhoeffer took it from the desk where Rojas had left it. During the conversation that followed he looked agitated, and bowed several times, saying "*Ja wohl, Excellenze; ja wohl, Excellenze*," as though he were addressing the German Ambassador in person.

At last he put down the telephone, and said pompously: "His Excellency the Ambassador waives his rights in this matter, and you may proceed to your examination, Herr Valenzuela."

The Chilean doctor bowed ironically:

"That is very kind of him, but let me tell you," he added sternly, "that, with or without his consent, I should have carried out this examination."

Rojas laughed:

"So he waives his rights! Ha! ha! ha!"

Rojas's anger had vanished as though by magic; he was in the highest of spirits; he turned to the sullen German.

"Will you now let us have what we require?"

"Yes; come this way."

The baffled man led them to the mortuary chamber where the remains lay, and, pointing to the marble table, he said: "You may select what you like, but I require a receipt for whatever you take."

"And I require a bag or some paper to wrap them in," said Valenzuela.

"I have no bag; I shall ring for some paper," said Westenhoeffer.

"I hope, Herr Westenhoeffer," said Valenzuela, "that our reports on this case and our opinions will be the same."

"I am sure that that will be the case," said the German doctor, bowing.

"When do you hand in your report?" asked Valenzuela.

"I have had it translated from the German into Spanish; and it should be in the hands of the authorities by this time."

A few minutes later Valenzuela, with a large round parcel under his arm, and followed by Rojas, entered the cab. They were driven to the School of Dentistry.

Rojas was undecided what to do. Would he go to Headquarters and see Westenhoeffer's report, or would he stay and await Doctor Valenzuela's report?

He decided to wait; paid the cab; and followed the famous dentist into the school. After all, he already knew the German report; he had heard it that morning in evidence; it had already arrived at its destination and could not be changed. Could it not? If Westenhoeffer suspected that their plot had been discovered, would

he not try and get the report back in order to alter it?

They had reached the door of the laboratory where Doctor Valenzuela was to make his microscopic examination. As the doctor opened the door, he turned to Rojas:

"Señor Rojas, I cannot allow you in here; you can wait in the anteroom if you would like to know the result at once."

"Will you be long, doctor?"

"Not more than an hour, although the written report will not be ready until tomorrow."

"I shall wait here, doctor; can you direct me to the telephone?"

"Yes, go to the caretaker; he will show you where it is; and if you come back here I shall let you have my opinion."

"Thank you very much," said Rojas.

The door was shut. Rojas went in search of the caretaker. He telephoned to Castor what he had done, and informed him of his suspicions regarding the likelihood of Westenhoeffer having the report returned and altering it.

Castor informed him that Westenhoeffer would not get the report back; that if he wanted to alter his opinion he would have to send a second report, but that the original one could not be touched.

This satisfied Rojas greatly and he went to the anteroom and waited—waited almost overwhelmed with a great sense of certainty.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ROJAS sat in an easy chair, pulled out a cigarette, and lit it. He watched the smoke curl up in fantastic shapes. He knew that his theory was correct. Oh! how he wished it to be proved so! He puffed at his cigarette in quick spasms that revealed the tense excitement of the eager brain. He blew the ashes off the cigarette, and puffed again. The easy chair felt uncomfortable. He got up and paced the room. In the centre was a table. He looked for a newspaper; there was none. He sat down again; he looked at his watch and found it was twenty minutes past five. They had arrived at five minutes past the hour. He had still forty-five minutes to wait; how the time dragged! He looked at the second hand and watched the little arrow go slowly round. Goodness! how long a minute is when you are waiting! He put his watch in his pocket, got up again, and paced the room. He gave three or four turns and again consulted his watch; had it stopped? No, the little arrow was moving. Still the other hands had not advanced; he put it back in his pocket; pulled out another cigarette, and lit it.

He sat down again and looked at the door behind which so much centred. How was the doctor getting on? He could imagine him looking through a microscope at the ghastly remains, sitting calmly there in his white overalls, his hands incased in rubber gloves to avoid contagion if there were any. He could picture him probing here, probing there, removing bits of bone or cinders which were in the way.

Suddenly the door opened and Doctor Valenzuela stepped into the room; he wore no overalls nor rubber gloves.

"Your theory, my friend, has proved correct; I congratulate you," said the doctor, holding out his hand, which Rojas shook heartily.

"My thanks to you, doctor; my sincere, sincere thanks. Can you prove it absolutely?"

"Oh, yes; as sure as that two and two are four."

Rojas could hardly believe what he heard; he hesitated, then asked doubtfully:

"Are you certain?"

"Perfectly."

"The murdered person is Tapia?" Rojas asked the question like an anxious child.

"I can only say that if your information about Beckert's teeth is correct, this is not Beckert's head, as it has only one extraction," answered Doctor Valenzuela.

"*Then it is Tapia's.*" The man's nerves were setting his whole body a-quiver. "Heavens! we must catch Beckert. He has a week's start of us. When will you have your report ready?"

"Tomorrow morning, or possibly late tonight."

"Will you work at home, doctor, or here?"

"Here."

"If I get through my business in time may I call for it tonight?"

"Certainly, but not before eleven."

"Good-bye, and thanks again, doctor."

CHAPTER XXIX

ROJAS quickly walked out, and, between running and walking, reached Headquarters. He was just in time to catch Castor as he was on the point of leaving.

"Doctor Valenzuela says the body is Tapia's," he exclaimed.

"What?"

"Well, not exactly," said Rojas, cooling down, "he says the body is not Beckert's."

"I suspected as much," said Castor drily, "but how does he know?"

Rojas related his visit to Doctor Dennis Lay, the result of his investigations, and the assurance from Doctor Valenzuela that the charred head had only one tooth missing.

"We must give out orders for the apprehension of Beckert at once," said Castor, ringing a bell; "the Andes Passes must be telegraphed to at once; also all the sea-ports."

He rapidly gave the necessary instructions to the police officer who had answered the bell; and, turning to Rojas, said:

"If it had not been for you, Rojas, this crime would have gone undetected; I congratulate you."

"Thank you," said Rojas.

"I give you carte blanche in this case, Rojas; do what you think best and follow up your wonderful success by laying your hands on Beckert. You have done good work, very good work; again I congratulate you"; he held out his hand to Rojas, who shook it cordially. "And now, instead of going home to dinner, I am going to the Foreign Office," continued Castor. "I was asked to inform Señor Balma of any developments in this case on account of the claim filed by the German Ambassador, who demanded full and summary punishment for Tapia and his accomplices."

"May I accompany you?" asked Rojas eagerly. "I would like to see some one there."

"Certainly, come along."

During the drive Rojas only answered Castor's questions by monosyllables; he was thinking deeply. "If I have drafts on a bank I must prove my identity in order to be paid. If I change my name, how can I prove my identity? Through a false passport. That's it. We shall see." So the busy keen brain worked out the tangle.

Arrived at the Foreign Office, Castor went in, asking for Señor Balma; whilst Rojas made straight for the passport department. It was already late, but he found one last solitary young man still in charge, to whom he explained who he was, and asked to see copies of the passports viséd

for the German Embassy. The book was produced.

"There are not many," said the young man. "How far back do you want?"

"Say three months."

"Here we are! Only one since the 4th December. That was for a German professor." Then the youth read out the name: "Ciro Lara Motte, January 8th." He turned to Rojas: "Oh! yes; I remember; poor Herr Beckert came himself; it was for a nephew of his going to Germany; that was on the 28th of January, about two weeks ago. Poor fellow!"

"May I take a few notes?" asked Rojas.

"Certainly; but I hope you won't be long; it is getting late. . . ."

Five minutes later Rojas was back at Headquarters dictating messages to be sent to all passes and ports; the purport of these messages was to arrest the bearer of a passport in the name of Ciro Lara Motte.

Rojas was a happy man. He had even got the name that Beckert had assumed. He knew that Beckert had no nephew bearing that name. What a lucky idea to go to the Foreign Office! thought he. He sent telegrams to the Argentine Police asking co-operation in the apprehension of Ciro Lara Motte. He worked until late. At about eleven o'clock that night he went in search of Valenzuela at the School of Dentistry.

CHAPTER XXX

ROJAS found the doctor putting the finishing touches to his report.

"May I read it, doctor?" he asked.

"Certainly, my friend," said the doctor, passing him a few sheets of paper.

Rojas took the papers and read:

Report of J. Valenzuela, D. S., etc.

The jaws, which I have been asked to examine, have all the teeth except one which has been extracted. Technically speaking, the word teeth applies to the thirty-two teeth which every well-developed adult should have. These jaws therefore have thirty-one normal teeth; and I can certify in the most absolute manner that only one tooth has been extracted.

THE SUPERIOR JAW.

The examination of this jaw reveals the absence of seven anterior teeth as follows—two incisors, two lateral, two canine, and the first left premolar.

The absence of the crowns on the roots of these teeth is explained by the fact, without

room for doubt, that they have been destroyed by blows dealt with a blunt instrument like a hammer immediately after death or whilst death was taking place. Notwithstanding the viciousness of the attempt at destruction of these teeth one can see perfectly, without the use of lenses, the remaining sections of these teeth which embody the whole area of the missing crowns. On each one of these teeth, the vessels and nerves belonging to them are easily discernible in their normal diameters which proves that not one of these teeth was ever deeply touched by professional hands.

The rest of the teeth on the upper jaw are splendidly sound, and show no sign whatever of decay. The wisdom tooth on the right side has been extracted.

The crushing surface of the teeth has the normal tubercules, the furrows are deep and show no wear, which indicates that they belonged to a person not over thirty years of age.

LOWER JAW.

This specimen has a fracture between the first and second left molar; the anterior teeth, including the canine teeth and first and second right molar; have also been attacked with a blunt instrument. The crowns are missing. Notwithstanding the attempt at destruction,

all the roots of the missing teeth exist, and I can declare emphatically that this jaw had the sixteen normal teeth belonging to it. The same observation applies to this jaw, that is to say; that it has not been touched deeply by any professional hand.

Signed J. VALENZUELA.

"*Caramba!*" exclaimed Rojas. "Tell me, Señor Valenzuela; if Westenhoeffer made, as he says he did, an examination of the teeth, what conclusions do you draw?"

"I can affirm that any one looking at these specimens would see, at the first glance, that they had been violently dealt with. If you look at the edges of the broken teeth you will see they are as sharp as broken glass."

"Do you think Westenhoeffer could tell the age of the person to whom they belonged?"

"Doctor Westenhoeffer has been engaged by the Government as professor of autopsies; he has vast experience. It is as easy for a professional man to tell the age of a person by his teeth, within a few years, as it is for a veterinary surgeon to tell the age of a horse, within a few months. You can draw your own conclusions."

"*Caramba!*" Rojas's eyes glittered. "So our foreign savants, as I suspected, were plotting with

the Ambassador towards the turning of suspicion from the subtle Wilhelm Beckert! and the brutes were laying the blame on poor Tapia. And the Government engages them, at magnificent salaries, to teach us their culture. My God! but I would like to clear out the lot."

Valenzuela's voice was hard as he replied slowly:

"If this plot is proved publicly, as it certainly is already privately, their reputation as to honour, truthfulness, and knowledge will suffer greatly," said he. "Why, a student of dentistry in his first year could have detected that the teeth belonged to a man of at most thirty, and, what is more, not to a foreigner."

"Why; how so?"

"Because we find amongst our lower and upper classes the best teeth in the world. These teeth of the dead man are typical of the standard of the teeth of our population. No German, or very few indeed, could reach the age of thirty with only one extraction and all the other teeth perfectly sound. The peculiar whiteness of them is characteristic. Westenhoeffer could not possibly help knowing this, and establishing a comparison," said Valenzuela with conviction.

"Why don't you put that in your report?" asked Rojas.

"Because I have been asked to make an examination of these teeth, and not to judge Westenhoeffer and his ally, Doctor Aichel."

"What a pity! But can't you put something in that will show them up?" insisted Rojas.

"I think that I have fulfilled my duty as to the report. I can't add more; I can't say less. My friend Rojas, you seem to think your powers of deduction are greater than anybody else's. The conclusions arrived at by you, after reading Westenhoeffer's report and mine, will be those arrived at by every sane person. And now I must be getting home, as it is very late."

"May I take your report to the Courts myself?" asked Rojas.

"If you like," said Valenzuela. "I have another copy in case you should lose this one."

Rojas laughed drily.

"Not much chance of that. I want to take it myself the first thing, so as to get a warrant for Beckert's arrest, and to justify the measures already taken by me this evening towards his capture."

They left the building together and on reaching the street each wended his separate way homewards.

. . . . . .

It so happened that night that as Welcheck, with a singing beauty clinging to his arm, left the

Opera, the girl noticed him start. They came to a sudden halt. As the girl followed the direction of the diplomat's stare, she saw a thick-set man with a fair beard turn and look at Welcheck, who gave an uneasy laugh as the man calmly stepped into the cab that Welcheck had hailed and was driven rapidly away in the crowd.

The girl pressed Welcheck's arm and laughed in his face.

He shrugged his shoulders, laughed somewhat mirthlessly in return, and said uneasily: "This dead man seems to haunt me—twice I have thought I saw Beckert, but he must have a double —with a fair beard. Wonder who the fellow is?"

CHAPTER XXXI

AT nine o'clock sharp, on the following morning, Rojas was handing Doctor Valenzuela's report to the clerk of the Courts. He then went to Headquarters, and, on arriving, was summoned by Castor.

"What is Doctor Valenzuela's report?" asked Castor.

"That the head belongs to Tapia without the shadow of a doubt. He says that any sane person can see that the German doctors could have told at a glance that the head did not belong to Beckert. I feel certain that they have kept quiet on instructions given by the German Ambassador."

"Rojas, I have a feeling that the murder of Tapia conceals something much deeper, more important, and more far reaching," said Castor earnestly. "The report made by Westenhoeffer, which I have here, is not satisfactory. He knew that the examination centred on the teeth; yet the report gives no detailed account of them. Doctors Westenhoeffer and Aichel had an interview with the Ambassador before the report, and they had one last night or rather early this morning at two o'clock. Both doctors in spite of the dark-

ness were well muffled up; they did not want to be recognized; they were at the Embassy until three o'clock. Welcheck has gone to Valdivia. Caleu is only four miles from the principal southern seaport, which contains fifty per cent of German or German-Chilean population; we may find out something from this trip of Welcheck's. Alvarado and Fuentes left on the same train."

"Fuentes! Alvarado! but, Señor Castor, they will burgle the secretary in the streets at midday, and knock him on the head so that he won't recognize them afterwards! They have as much tact as a sledge-hammer."

"I don't think they will go as far," said Castor, smiling. "I explained to them both, and very clearly, that if they were successful there was reward; but if they failed, they must stand the consequences of their own stupidity. They are clever men; they know I won't protect them if they fail. I specially pointed out to them that we could not get anything by force; that we could not raid the Embassy or any of the offices or residences of the members of the Embassy. Our information must be obtained by sheer astuteness. . . . I have some work for you this morning; here is an order which will give you access to Gonzales and his son."

"*Caramba!* Chief, just what I came for!" exclaimed Rojas.

"Very well, here it is; tell these men they will probably be set free in a few days, as we can now surmise that Beckert's evidence was not true. Their sentence will be commuted. Find out what Beckert was doing at Caleu; you know what to do. Go, good luck! I have wired to Europe for information as to Beckert's antecedents."

"Fine! Splendid! *Adios*, Señor!" said Rojas, and departing he added to himself as he went out: "At last the old governor is moving; thank goodness!"

CHAPTER XXXII

ROJAS and the Governor of San Pablo Penitentiary were in earnest conversation when a knock at the door interrupted them.

"Come in!" called the Governor.

Led between two warders, a man of about fifty was ushered in. He was dressed in prison clothes, his white hair closely cropped, his cap in his hand. His appearance was one of deep dejection. His eyes, jet black, looked downwards, as though not able to bear the humiliation of his present surroundings.

"Gonzales," said the Governor, "this gentleman has brought some good news for you; you may be free in a few days. We need, in order to be able to set you free very soon, to clear some points which were not brought out at your trial."

The man paled with emotion, and his whole bulky frame shook. He did not lift his eyes; he remained quiet as though he had heard nothing. He heaved a deep sigh; tears sprang to his eyes, and coursed down his cheeks, at the joyful prospect of soon seeing his family. Brushing away

his tears with the back of his hand as though feeling rather ashamed of his demonstration of weakness, he said in a steady, manly voice:

"What do you wish to know?"

"When did Herr Beckert first go to Caleu?"

"To my knowledge about five years ago."

"How long was he there each time he went down?"

"Sometimes a day, sometimes a week, sometimes a month."

"What did he go there for?"

"To try and dishonour my daughter."

"Don't you think he had other objects?"

"No."

"Did he have no occupation there?"

"He said often that he and some other gentlemen were prospecting for gold."

"Did they work a mine?"

"They worked several mines."

"Do you know if they ever got any gold out?"

"They couldn't, because there is no gold in Caleu."

"Did you ever see them work the mines?"

"No; because the machinery never arrived."

"What machinery?"

"I don't know what kind of machinery it was."

"How do you know it was coming, then?"

"Because I was told so; and I saw the big foundations for them."

"Could you show us where these foundations are?"

"Some of them. I know they built lots of them; but as the company did not have any more money to continue working, they left the foundations as they were. They must be covered over with vegetation now, and difficult to locate."

"But you said just now that you could locate them."

"Yes, I might locate two or three of them, certainly two."

"How big were they?"

"As big as an ordinary large room."

"How deep?"

"I don't know; they did not allow people to approach as they said they were afraid of the secret of the machinery being discovered."

"But you approached?"

Gonzales was silent.

"Answer my question."

"I did."

"What for?"

"Because I knew there was no gold there, and that they were lying."

"Yes; and what more?"

"Well; I was anxious to know what they were up to."

"And what conclusion did you come to?"

"That these foreigners mistook fools' gold for

real gold; and that they were spending their money for nothing."

"Did you ever tell Herr Beckert that there was no gold?"

"No."

"But you knew there was none?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you tell him?"

"Because they paid very good wages to all who worked for them; and I wasn't going to play a dirty trick on our friends."

"A dirty trick?"

"Yes; if they had known that what they saw was fools' gold, they would have cleared out."

"Where did Herr Beckert stay when at Caleu?"

"At the explosives factory."

"Who owns the factory?"

"Mr. Otto."

"Otto what?"

"I can't pronounce those foreign names; we knew him as Mr. Otto."

"Did Herr Beckert always stay there?"

"Oh, no, he sometimes stayed at the Hotel Germania, and sometimes at the yards with Mr. Schultz."

"What are these yards?"

"Where they build ships."

"Were Mr. Otto and Mr. Schultz partners in the gold mines?"

"Oh, yes, they were always together, with a lot of mining engineers; and they had lots of arguments as to where they were to dig next; they were awful fools those engineers."

"How do you know they had arguments? Do you understand German?"

"I don't need to know German to know when people disagree."

"Could your son tell us more than you have told us?"

"I don't think so."

"Very well, you may expect to be set free very soon. We shall probably want you to show us the foundations, so as to prove that you have spoken the truth."

"I have spoken the truth," answered Gonzales.

"Very well; take him away."

The warders led Gonzales back to the workroom where all "long terms" are given occupations.

"Would you like to question the son?" asked the Governor.

"I don't think so, what else could we ask?" queried Rojas.

"That is for you to decide."

"We shall leave it at that for the present; I shall report to Señor Castor and see what he says; and now, sir, I must go," said Rojas; and, taking up his hat, he departed, bidding the Governor good-bye.

CHAPTER XXXIII

CASTOR sat wrapped in meditation at his bureau; Rojas sat opposite him, having delivered his report. At last Castor spoke:

"It is difficult to believe that mining engineers, even though Germans, could mistake fools' gold for gold. We must have the platforms for the machinery examined, if they exist. These may solve the mystery of that ridiculous venture of Beckert's gold-mining company. I shall telegraph to Fuentes and Alvarado to investigate this; they shall interview Mr. Otto and Mr. Schultz."

Acting on his words he wrote out a telegram, rang the bell, and had it sent off.

"The more I think about it," said Rojas, "the more I believe Gonzales is right, and that they did believe there is gold there."

"Tell me, Rojas; would you know fools' gold if you saw it?"

"Of course," answered Rojas.

"And you are not a mining engineer; do you mean to tell me that Mr. Otto and Mr. Schultz, who apparently have been here in Chile for some years, are more ignorant than you; and that en-

gineers are to be led into a mistake because fools' gold has the appearance of gold, and glitters? why, every child here knows it isn't gold; this is all nonsense."

"But, if so, why build foundations for hydraulic machinery to wash down gold from the hills?" asked Rojas drily.

"That we don't know; but we must find out; we shall soon hear from Caleu; and now tell me have you any news of Beckert?"

"None, I only ordered his arrest last night; hardly time yet to catch him."

There was a knock at the door; and a policeman entered.

"There is a gentleman who desires immediate speech with you, Señor Castor."

"Has he stated the nature of his business?"

"Yes, sir; he says it concerns Mr. Beckert."

A look of intense surprise showed on the faces of both Castor and Rojas.

"Ask him in," commanded Castor.

A few moments later a tall fair man was ushered in; he had a lofty forehead, very bright and penetrating eyes, and seemed to belong to the upper classes by his dress and manners.

"Are you Señor Castor?" he asked, looking at Castor, seated at the bureau.

"Yes, sir," he replied, rising, "what can I do for you?"

"I have something of importance to tell you," began the visitor. "I am Isaac Nikolaievitch, Pole by birth, Chilean by adoption. I am manager of the European Jewellery Company, Calle del Estado 437. I saw in the papers this morning that the body of Señor Beckert had been exhumed, and that Doctors Westenhoeffer and Aichel, after due examination, had declared to some reporters that the body was that of Herr Beckert; is this so?"

"It is so," said Castor.

"If the body were exhumed, it is natural to suppose that there existed some doubt as to the identity; am I correct?"

"You are."

"I read the news of the report of Doctors Westenhoeffer and Aichel this morning; this report stated with finality that the body belonged to Wilhelm Beckert. I repeat this, in order to impress upon you the fact that I believed Herr Beckert was dead; therefore, when I say to you that I spoke to him last night, I do not wish you to think that this is the imagining of a disordered brain."

"What! last night?" "Where?" exclaimed both together.

"In the Portal Edwards."

"At what time?"

"About half-past twelve. I had been to the

Opera with the Proprietor of the Royal Hotel and his daughter. As we reached the door of the hotel, which was already closed, I saw Beckert, who was walking towards us. I recognized him by his figure and gait. For the moment I had forgotten all about his death; and I walked up to him and, speaking in German, said to him: '*Wie gehts*, Herr Beckert.' He answered me in Spanish: 'I do not know you!' Immediately I recognized his voice; and I instantly said: 'What! Herr Beckert, don't you recognize me?' He again replied in Spanish: 'I know you not'—which is the German order of the words, a literal translation from the German. Only then did it dawn upon me that I was speaking to a man who was supposed to be dead. By this time he had slowly stepped away from me, and entered a four-wheeler, which was waiting for a fare. I followed him; and leaning on the door of the cab, I looked into his face, and then recognized his features. I again asked him: 'Don't you know *me*, Isaac Nikolaievitch?'—upon which he put his handkerchief to his mouth and said: 'Get out of this; I don't know you.' The carriage drove off, but such was my astonishment that I stood there as one in a trance, until Mr. Hengel called me, saying: 'Are you coming in? because we want to shut the door.' I slowly rejoined them, and

told them of my meeting; at which they both laughed, saying that I must have mistaken someone else for Beckert."

"I suppose," said Castor, "that you noticed the number of the carriage?"

"I am very sorry I did not; but my astonishment at having met him, whom I, with the whole of Santiago, thought dead, prevented me from even thinking about it."

"Can you be precise as to the exact time when you met Beckert?"

"It was after half-past twelve, because the hotel doors close at that time—and Mr. Hengel had to open it with his own latchkey; and it must have been before a quarter to one, as, when we passed through the hotel entrance, I remember Miss Hengel remarking that it was a quarter to one."

"Was the carriage standing in front of the door of the hotel?"

"Yes."

Castor turned to Rojas.

"Rojas, will you instruct them to find that carriage?"

"Yes, sir." Rojas left the room and Nikolaievitch continued:

"I would not have come here—to be perfectly frank—Señor Castor, if it had not been that Mr. and Mrs. Hengel have told everybody about this adventure, which they think is all imagination on

my part. I was a friend of Mr. Beckert; and I would not have given him away. But as this meeting is the talk of every one, sooner or later it had to reach your ears; and then I might have been taken by you for a coverer of misdeeds; therefore I decided it was wiser for me to make a clean breast of it."

"When was the last time you saw Mr. Beckert before this occurrence?"

Rojas came back at this moment and, before Mr. Nikolaievitch could answer, said:

"The matter is being attended to, Señor Castor."

Nikolaievitch considered for awhile:

"I believe I saw him four nights ago; but to this I could not testify."

"What! really?" exclaimed Castor. "Four nights ago!"

"Yes, but as I have said already, I would not swear to it. Four nights ago I was at the German Club until about one after midnight. As you know, the Embassy Offices are on the way from the Club to the hotel. As I was nearing the ruins, I saw a man looking at them; he was going the same way as I, and I was struck by the resemblance of his build and gait to Beckert. When I passed him I looked at him; but saw at once I was mistaken, as the man had a long fair beard whilst Beckert only wore a moustache. I

dismissed the subject from my mind; but your question has brought the incident back."

"Can you tell us where Beckert usually had his hair cut?" asked Rojas.

"At the Peluqueria Francesa in the Calle del Estado, nearly opposite our jewellery shop; I have often met him there," answered Nikolaievitch.

"Are you always to be found at your jewellery shop?"

"Yes, I am there from ten in the morning until six in the evening, except at lunch time when I go at noon and come back at two o'clock."

"I am very much obliged to you for your information," said Castor; "it is very timely and useful, as it corroborates what he have already suspected, and adds to our knowledge the fact that the fugitive was here in Santiago last night."

"I must be going now," said Nikolaievitch.

"Again accept our thanks," said Castor, as the visitor departed.

When Castor and Rojas were alone, Castor suggested to Rojas a visit to the hair-dresser's.

Rojas left at once.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ROJAS asked for the manager of the barber's shop; and was shown into a little back room. When left alone with this man, he asked:

"Did you know Herr Beckert?"

"Yes."

"How long ago, more or less, did you sell him a set of false whiskers?"

The man was scared, and did not answer at once.

Rojas spoke sharply:

"I am Inspector Rojas; and if you don't answer at once, to prison you go."

"I don't know; I can't remember," stammered the frightened man; "let me ask the man who attended to him usually."

"Very well; but be quick! bring him here!"

The barber disappeared, and in a trice was back again with another man, who spoke with a strong German accent.

Rojas questioned at once.

"When did you sell a false beard to Herr Beckert?" demanded Rojas sternly.

"About three months ago, sir."

"Didn't you know it was forbidden?"

"Yes, sir; but he said it was to go to a fancy dress ball. Besides, he was a diplomat, sir."

"Have you an entry in the books?"

"Yes, sir," said the manager; "here is the book."

He looked through it for some time; and, after a few minutes, said:

"Here it is! *September 27th*, $25.00. *One human hair beard.*"

"Give me a copy of the entry; and sign it, please," said Rojas.

This done, he left the shop. The frightened barbers breathed more freely, but were much bewildered. . . . But Rojas knit his brows on quite other things. This complicated matters. Three persons had to be looked for: first, Beckert as he was; second, Beckert with a fair beard; and third, Ciro Lara, who might be disguised as anything.

As soon as Rojas arrived at Headquarters, he ordered telegrams to be sent to every police station, port, and the Andean passes, giving the description of the three characters that Beckert might assume.

Rojas paced his private office, his brows knit. From time to time he brushed the hair back from his forehead, as though sweeping away thoughts that deserved no notice. He unconsciously

smoked and puffed unceasingly at his cigarette, as though seeking to extract from it the knowledge he desired. At last he stopped short; stood like a statue for fully a couple of minutes. "Yes," he said aloud, "he can't have taken any other route. I shall go myself. I had better go first—at once —to Colonel Flores; and ask his assistance."

CHAPTER XXXV

ROJAS strode quickly towards the barracks of the Carabineros—a Regiment of the Line but devoted to safeguarding country roads and rural districts. A cavalry regiment of the highest standard, the officers and men are exceptionally well paid; only the best men are admitted; the discipline is terribly strict. The risks these soldiers run every day are great, as they have to capture the most desperate bandits and cattle-thieves in their own lairs, where the soldiers may be ambushed at any time.

Colonel Flores was in. Rojas found him busy at work and apologized for taking up his valuable time.

"What can I do for you?" asked the Colonel in a sharp cutting voice like the crack of a whip.

He was a man of about forty-five, very bald; but borrowing the hair from the side he plastered it over the bald crown of his head and brought it over his forehead in a flat wave. He had small grey eyes, a beaked nose, a sensitive mouth, and a strong chin; and was as near an image of Napoleon as one could find. He was not more than five foot six and rather inclined to be stout.

Rojas began:

"Colonel, I want your help to catch——" he stopped.

"Come on," snapped Flores; "shall I finish for you? Yes? to catch Beckert. Do you think I come from Curico, where old men are said to act as new-born babies? I have expected your visit since the body was ordered to be exhumed."

"I wish you were my chief," said Rojas, lost in admiration of this wonderful little man.

"And now you want my help to catch the man, eh? And you think he has gone? Now, tell me where? I have formed my opinion; I have already wired to a certain detachment to keep strict watch. Now tell me; and I will show you a copy of the wire; now, where?"

"I believe, Colonel," said Rojas, "he must have gone via Chillan."

"*Ordenanza!*" snapped out Flores, calling an orderly.

A soldier, who was waiting outside the door, instantly appeared.

"Bring me the copies of telegrams sent this morning; quick!"

The soldier disappeared, and in a few minutes was back with a file of telegram copies.

Colonel Flores selected one and read:

"*Lieutenant Fuensalida. Keep strict watch*

Chillan Victoria Passes. Give up Tapia. Look for Beckert height five feet nine fair hair beginning baldness bushy brows shortsighted German accent probably disguised and assumed other name and accompanied by guide. Flores."

"You beat me, Colonel! But how do you know he has a guide?"

The Colonel's eyes snapped.

"Because Beckert is not a fool; and knowing the difficulties of such a journey, he must either take a guide or get lost and die of starvation in the Cordilleras. He has naturally preferred the guide."

"Certainly it must be so," said Rojas. "Now, Colonel; can you let me have two specially good men, well horsed? and can I have a horse from your detachment at Chillan?"

"Yes, you can have a horse there; I shall give you an order, on presentation of which you can have a horse at any detachment in the province. As to two good men, they are all good, every one of my carabineros. You have only to take any two at random, and you won't find two better men, except amongst the rest of them."

"I don't want to choose, Colonel," said Rojas, "but I wish you would give me two men *from that locality*, who may be in your regiment. Two men

who may have been engaged, before joining, as 'arrieros,' conducting cattle from Argentine here, and vice versa, through the Victoria Passes."

The Colonel smiled.

"As I had an idea you were coming, I had already asked the Major for two such men."

He rang a bell; and the Major appeared. Flores enquired of him if he had already selected the men. The Major answered, "Yes, sir," and, on being requested to produce them, he said the men were stationed at Chillan and would be ready on the arrival of Señor Rojas.

Colonel Flores then asked the Major to have the order made out for Señor Rojas.

When the Major left, Rojas said, with frank admiration:

"Colonel Flores, if the Secret Service had you for their Chief, there would be no more crimes undetected."

"You flatter me; I am an Army man. If I were your Chief, probably there would be wholesale murder going on. No, thank you; I am better here."

"I don't know," said Rojas. "Señor Castor is a good Chief, but he is slow. Oh! so slow."

"You think that, because you are a young man. A man in Castor's position must act with great deliberation, not like us. We are amateurs, and responsible to no one; if we catch the wrong man,

we let him go—and apologize. If Castor does it; well, Heaven help him!"

At that moment a knock was heard at the door; a lieutenant entered the room, clicked his heels together, stood at attention before Flores's table, and said:

"By your leave, Colonel; a telephone message has just come through from Chillan saying that two men from the regiment saw a man arriving this morning, by the night express from Santiago, whom they thought suspicious. The man looked foreign; was wrapped up to his nose in a silk muffler; wore a hunting suit; had a small bag, and a gun-case. He was followed by our men to a small hotel near the station—not the Grand Hotel—where he had breakfast, and a few drinks. He then went to a barber's shop near by, where he had his moustache shaved off. He then went to the Belle Jardiniers, bought a vicuña poncho and a heavy woollen muffler. The man was followed from there to the station; and as he was going to board the train for the Cordillera, our men noticed that he entered a third-class carriage. This confirmed their opinion of the man's suspicious character, as he wore good clothes. When they had seen him earlier pay for breakfast and drinks, he had seemed to have a good deal of money about him; therefore they now went up to him and asked him to give up his bag and to

consider himself under arrest. At first he turned pale; but immediately afterwards addressed our men in a most angry and imperative tone, asking them whom they took him for. Our men said Beckert, and required him to accompany them quietly without any further protest; whereupon the man showed them a passport, supported by the German Embassy, and counter-signed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in favour of Ciro Lara Motte, who was proceeding to Argentine——"

Rojas interrupted.

"Ciro Lara Motte? *Caramba!* we have got him."

The lieutenant looked at Rojas indignantly for interrupting him, and continued:

"By your leave, Colonel; our men were satisfied that the passport was a genuine one, and the likeness of the photograph was unmistakable. They let him proceed towards the Victoria Passes, apologizing for their mistake."

"Good God! Let him go, you said!" exclaimed Rojas, jumping out of his seat, and clutching the lieutenant's arm, who looked amazed at this man, whose excitement he could not understand. With a quick jerk he freed his arm, with a ferocious look.

"Sit down, Rojas; and calm yourself!" snapped Flores.

Rojas turned on him excitedly.

"Sit down? I can't sit down; don't you know that Ciro Lara Motte is the name on the passport in Beckert's possession?"

"No; I did not," curtly answered Flores. "As usual the police keep their secrets, and come for help after the criminal has been let go. Why didn't you let us know this before, man?"

"Because I only found it out last night."

"Telephone this at once to Chillan, please," said Flores to the lieutenant.

"Señor Rojas," said Flores, when the subaltern had left, "you very nearly got into trouble with my lieutenant; they are not used to being handled. A second more, and even my presence would not have saved you."

"I am awfully sorry, Colonel; I will apologize to him; will you call him back?

"Never mind, I shall convey your apologies to him as soon as he comes to say he has fulfilled orders. And now that you have your orders for the detachment, you had better try to catch the four-fifteen; you will be in Chillan tomorrow at six in the morning."

"But, good heavens! to have lost him like this! It is too bad! He has twenty-four hours' start!"

"Calm yourself," said Flores; "it will take him four days, at least, to get across; my men can do it in two; so can you, if you can keep up with

them. You will get relays at every post. I shall wire for two men to start at once in pursuit; and shall tell them to let them know at the various posts to have horses ready saddled for you and my two men. These shall meet you at the station to-morrow morning at six sharp."

"Thank you, Colonel. I must go. It is too bad to have let him go, too bad! Thank you again, and good-bye!"

"Good luck to you!" said Flores, and sat down to give his instructions.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AT five o'clock next morning, Rojas was awakened by the sleeping-car attendant, and was told that in thirty minutes they would be in Chillan. He looked at his watch and wondered how it was possible for a train to be ahead of time. He had travelled little and was not up to the tricks of the sleeping-car attendants. Travellers do well not to be too credulous when they are told the train is ahead of time—whether in Chile, Scotland, or Timbuctoo.

Rojas was ready in about twenty minutes; had breakfast in ten; and was ready to get off the train at five-thirty. He had a good half-hour to wait. At six fifteen the train steamed into Chillan.

As soon as he got off, he made his way to the exit. At the door he met two carabineros; one took his small valise from his hand; the other, a sergeant, saluted, saying:

"Good morning, Señor Rojas."

"Good morning, Sergeant; I am Rojas; how did you know me from the other passengers?"

"Description by telephone last night," answered the sergeant.

Rojas smiled. He admired the clock-like machinery of that cavalry corps.

"Well," said he, "we must get on our way at once; what do you propose?"

"Take train, seven o'clock, to end of rails; from there on, on horseback."

"How far does the train take us?"

"Only about thirty miles."

"Did Ciro Lara take the train?"

"Yes, sir, at ten o'clock last night."

"Any news of him?"

"None, sir."

"Was he accompanied by a guide?"

"Found out last night he took Fragaza."

"Who is Fragaza?"

"Cleverest guide and horse-thief living; have had him up six times, no conviction."

"That's cheerful," said Rojas; "I suppose he knows the country well, and where to hide; are they well horsed?"

"Yes, sir, excepting Lara or Beckert; he's got a poor sort of nag, one of those imported racing horses; paid a good pile for it; no good mountain work; height kills them."

"What is your name?"

"Sergeant Veloso, at your service, sir," he answered, bringing his hand to his cap.

"And our friend here?"

"Private Bello."

"Very well, where do we take the train?"

"Same platform."

"I must get the tickets."

"Got them here," answered Veloso.

"Good; we shall get on," said Rojas, pleased.

Veloso was a good specimen of the Chilean soldier; standing about five feet ten or eleven, he looked much less owing to his powerful proportions. He was too wide in the shoulders, and his chest showed great strength; excepting for this, which gave him a certain heaviness, he was perfectly built. His hair was jet black, thick, and stubby. His eyes, brown and sleepy, had long curly eyelashes, and, when speaking, they lighted up with extraordinary vivacity. The nose was short and wide. He was clean shaven like all carabineros; showing the lips thick and the bulldog determination of the chin. When speaking, his face was pleasant and alert; when at rest, his sleepy eyes belied him with a look of indolence and lack of energy.

Private Bello—who should have been handsome—did not do honour to his name, having from childhood been pitted with small-pox; but he had, notwithstanding, a soldierly appearance. They were both in the pink of condition, and ready for all eventualities with short carbines slung over their shoulders.

In the distance of the clear morning atmosphere the train could be seen coming.

"Our train," said Veloso.

"Where are our horses?" enquired Rojas.

"Punta de Ricles."

"Oh! so they have been sent forward!"

"Last night."

"Good."

Veloso looked at Bello slyly; and Bello, following Veloso's glance, looked at the legs and hips of Rojas, which were encased in thin town trousers —at his rather portly waist—and at his bowler hat. They looked at each other again and smiled.

The same idea was in both their minds: how was this townsman, with these thin cheviot clothes and bowler hat, to stand the thorns and bushes when riding through them? How was his face to stand the fearful sunburn produced by the rarefied Andean atmosphere, together with the reflection of the eternal snows?

When they were in the train, Sergeant Veloso, after a consultation with Bello, approached Rojas, and said:

"Señor Rojas, what have you in your bag?"

"A change of linen, some brushes, and a poncho."

"The poncho you can put on," said Veloso.

"The rest must be left behind. Got any leggings, and another hat?"

"I left in too much of a hurry to buy any, Sergeant."

"May be able to fit you up at Punta de Ricles," said Veloso.

"I won't waste time on that," said Rojas; "I will be able to do as I am."

"Been in the Cordillera before?"

"No," answered Rojas.

"Thought so," said Veloso. And he added: "Ridden any, lately?"

"No."

"Thought so."

Rojas could not help smiling.

"You did? Well, friend Veloso, you will see that what you can stand, I can."

"Hope so."

Arrived at the end of their train-journey, they found at the station two carabineros with three horses. Veloso, Bello, and Rojas mounted. Veloso led the way and, after a short canter, drew up at the headquarters of the detachment. They dismounted, and, led by the sergeant, sat down to a square meal, at the same time enquiring if any news had been received. Rojas was anxious to get away; Veloso seemed to linger for ever. At last a man came in with a pair of gaiters and an old felt hat with a wide brim. These were offered

to Rojas. The leggings were too small, and the hat much too large.

"To have lost all this valuable time for this rubbish is madness," said Rojas. "Let us go on at once."

"As you like," said Veloso, with a suspicion of a shrug.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE men rode in silence for the first five miles. The road was bad; but still it could be called a road. The hot rays of the sun struck through the clear atmosphere, making them perspire freely. Rojas felt as he had never felt in all his life. What a glorious ride! What majestic scenery! They were riding up, up, into the eternal snows. In two days, so Flores had said, they would reach the frontier of Argentine. Ah! it was good to live. The fresh cool wind blew against his cheeks and filled his lungs; what a difference from Santiago atmosphere! Up, up! in two days they would be at the summit of the passes, some twelve thousand feet high. There they would warn the Customs Officials of their quest; then, if Beckert had not crossed, they could double back on their tracks to meet him. Of course Beckert could not cross before they arrived.

"Veloso!"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think we shall get to the boundary before Beckert?"

"No, sir."

"What!"

"We're not going all the way; my captain told me to manage this the best way I could."

"Then what do you propose?"

"Get ahead of them."

"Yes; and then?"

"Turn back on them, if we don't come on them going."

"And if they give us the slip?"

"Bello will go on to notify the Customs."

"But if we come on them and they turn desperate! It will be even chances, two against two that they get away."

"What of it? You have a carbine, and I have one."

Only then did he notice something which, when galloping, jolted his leg. Yes, hanging down vertically from the saddle was a carbine.

"I am not a very good shot," said Rojas.

"I am middling," said Veloso proudly.

"Still; if we divide our forces we shall not stand such a good chance," argued Rojas.

"Señor Rojas, you don't know this business at all. We will catch one first, then the other."

"I don't understand you, Veloso."

"You will see."

They galloped on, up, up. At five in the afternoon they arrived at the first post; and after some food and drink, taken in a hurry, they were again

in the saddle. The horses were fresh, and the speed good.

But Rojas felt uncomfortable. The horse he had left behind had a smooth canter; he felt he could have gone to sleep on it. This one jolted him up and down in a most trying way. The left leg of his trousers insisted on rucking up to his knee, and from his knee up, between the thigh and the saddle. This made folds against the tender inside flesh of his thigh which, after an hour's ride, became unbearable.

At first he had not noticed it; he would slow down every now and then, and pull his trouser down. He had said he would keep up; well, he would. The folds insisted in re-forming themselves again, and chafing his leg. His pride forbade him to stay behind; so he "stuck it," leaning down every hundred yards to ease his leg.

They were giving the horses a breather. Veloso noticed Rojas's hand reaching down to his knee and straightening the folds.

"Señor Rojas, why don't you change the pace of your horse?"

"How?"

"Your left leg hurts you?"

"Yes."

"Dig your spur on the left side, and make him canter with his right foot foremost. Hold the reins tight while you do it."

He tried it when they began to canter again. Heavens what a relief! The horse seemed the same which he had left behind. This way he could go on for ever. Why hadn't he asked Veloso what to do before? Now he had foolishly, from false pride, suffered a deep chafing on his leg, and he had two whole days at least on horseback, not counting the night, to which to look forward. He would put his pride in his pocket; he would give in to these men who were experts in these matters.

At nine that night they reached a posada, an old dilapidated inn, built of adobe, with a thatched roof.

Veloso reined up, and said they would stay there for a couple of hours till the moon was up. The horses needed a rest and a feed; and so did they.

Bello was detailed to look after the horses.

Veloso and Rojas called for such food as could be provided by the innkeeper; and when the order had been given, they questioned him.

"Had Fragaza passed up?" asked Veloso.

"I don't know Fragaza."

"Come on; you don't know Fragaza?"

"No."

"Has he threatened you if you said he went by this morning?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Very well; has a gentleman in a big slouch hat, with a vicuña poncho, a thick woollen muffler, eyeglasses, and a foreign accent, gone up?"

"There are so many travellers, sir; one can't notice all of them."

"Was Fragaza travelling with any one?"

"I don't know."

"Serve us a drink of pisco, for it is cold," said Veloso.

When the innkeeper was out of earshot, Rojas heard his companion whispering:

"Keep him engaged here; don't let the scoundrel get out of the room; I will go and make enquiries as soon as he returns."

They sat down at the table seemingly dead-beat. The innkeeper brought a bottle of pisco and two glasses, and set them on the table. Veloso drank a glass, and, getting up, said:

"Where in perdition is our beauty? I must go and look after that scoundrel Bello."

He sauntered slowly out of the room.

Rojas asked the innkeeper to have a drink with him, which invitation the other accepted. The innkeeper fetched a glass from a table near-by, but somehow or other, seeing Veloso make his exit by the service door, he suddenly discovered that the glass was not clean.

"These girls never do anything right," said he. "I must go and fetch a clean glass, and give her a scolding."

"No, you don't!" said Rojas. "You keep me company, and drink out of that glass! I shall consider myself offended if you leave me like this after I have asked you to drink with me. Come on! be a good fellow!"

The tone was not pleasant to the ear; the innkeeper hesitated and sat down, and drank, saying times were very hard. This ought to be the busy season. Other years, hundreds of *arrieros* would be going up and coming down, men with pockets full of money who liked a good drink and paid well; now there were no travellers, or very few. He did not know what was the trouble; he had been there twenty-seven years and had never seen times like the present. And so on through the conventional gird against luck.

Veloso, coming back, told the innkeeper to bring the eatables at once, and have them served.

"Must have an hour's rest after food before going on," Veloso turned to Rojas, "must ride for all we are worth to next post. Ought to be there two in the morning; change horses; and by six, reach the next post for breakfast."

Rojas listening to all this, was thinking of his sore leg. He thought he would ride more comfortably if he passed a string or thong under his

shoe and tied both sides of the lower part of the trousers-legs to it. He asked for a thick piece of twine and with his knife pierced his beautiful cheviot trousers, heaving a sigh, and tied them under his boots.

Veloso watched the act with approval.

"Señor Rojas; mutton fat on chafed part; do it good; want some?"

"Think so?"

"Sure; prevent inflammation."

"Very well; I will put some on if I can get it."

"Right!" said Veloso, disappearing. A few moments later he came into the common room with a saucer containing hot fat.

"There, rub it into the flesh, hard," he said. "Bring back what's left."

Rojas went to a private room and rubbed in the fat. He came back with the saucer in his hand, half full, and put it on the end of the table.

Bello came in, sitting down as the meal began. His eyes looked bright with excitement. He looked at Rojas and Veloso; and they knew he had news of importance to convey. The innkeeper himself was waiting on them, or rather superintending the maid, and occasionally helping them to wine. He did most of the talking, thinking of the bill; the conversation was steered to the difficulties in obtaining wines, vegetables, etc. They had to bring every mortal thing on

mule back. The *arrieros* charged five dollars a load of twenty kilos. The times were so bad. Everything so expensive. He left them to make up the bill.

As soon as they had finished, Veloso and Bello stretched themselves out on some benches, and went fast asleep. Rojas remained at the table, drinking his coffee, and enjoying a cigar and liqueur. It would have been impossible for him to sleep on a bench.

At ten minutes to eleven Bello roused, and left to look after the horses. Veloso came up to the table and found Rojas sound asleep, with his head resting on his hand.

"Señor Rojas! must get on."

Rojas woke up.

"Haven't finished my liqueur," he said dreamily; "nor my cigar."

"Finish them then," said Veloso, and added, pointing to the saucer, "put some of this fat on your face sir; keep you from blistering."

"No thanks, not that stuff; I prefer blisters on my face."

"As you like." Veloso shrugged grimly.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE horses were brought round and the three men set off in single file; Veloso leading at a smart canter for about half an hour. He then slowed down to breathe the horses.

"Have you any news?" asked Rojas, addressing both of them.

"Señor Beckert is with Fragaza," answered Bello.

"I could have told you that, my beauty," said Veloso. "Tell us what time they left the posada."

"This morning at nine o'clock."

"*Caramba!* They're going it; so much the better Beckert's horse will drop dead; reach eight thousand feet height; pace too hot if they slept there last night," said Veloso in his jerky way.

"What time did they get there?"

"At about three in the morning."

"Not so bad," said Veloso, giving credit where credit was due—"it's that old devil Fragaza; he must have done something big too to get away so quickly. Got any spare horses?"

"Fragaza has one; the gringo has not."

"The gringo first, then Fragaza," said Veloso.

"Do you think," asked Rojas, "that in case of necessity Fragaza will leave Beckert in the lurch?"

"Sure! Not first time."

"Do they know they are being followed?"

"Lord, yes; our other men should be nearly on them by now. Won't catch them. Fragaza can hear a horse coming for miles. Will hide; let them go by; then follow. I know him."

"Then there are some carabineros ahead of us?" asked Rojas.

"Sure!"

"Then what are we going on for?"

"To catch Fragaza and Beckert."

"Do you think we will?"

"Sure!"

"But why send Bello on to the Customs?"

"Carabineros taking different roads later on to different passes."

"I see."

They started cantering single file again as before. Veloso seemed to know every turn and bush on the road; up, up, they went. The light of the full moon turned night into day. They could see the snows not over thirty miles away. A breeze was blowing from the Cordillera, an Arctic breeze, dry and bitterly cold, right against their

faces. The sweat on the horses did not show at all, the wind dried it as soon as it came out, forming a cake of dust on their backs. They had been travelling all day and part of the night on the slope that leads up to the chains of mountains of the Andean Range.

The vegetation had been marvellous up to the foot of the first steep incline. From thence the mountain-sides showed bare, studded here and there with thorny dwarf bushes, five feet at the highest; more often three. Towering over the bushes stood the thorny araucanian pines, a tree that never grows over eight or ten feet high and takes centuries to reach that full height. What a contrast this dwarf growth with the tremendous trees of the lower country! How this vegetation exists is an enigma, scorched by the sun in daytime, swept by an Arctic wind every night, and for nine months of the year not a drop of rain or water!

The path over which they were travelling was of loose sharp stone, prismatic in shape.

Veloso cantered on through this most difficult country. Rojas followed. He had left the reins loose, confiding to the sagacity of his horse. Bello brought up the rear.

As they went along, the path narrowed more and more. At last the ascent became so marked that they had to slow down to a walk. They

were now on a mule path with a sheer drop on one side of four thousand feet. On the other the mountain, nearly perpendicular, towered above them, the thorny bushes rubbing against their legs.

Rojas was suffering agonies. Every step meant a hundred pin-pricks, the thorns entering his flesh and tearing his trousers. He lifted a leg over the pommel of the saddle riding womanlike. Thank goodness, thought he, on the other side was a precipice and no thorns. They had reached an altitude of six thousand feet. The horses were breathing hard although at a walk. Rojas pulled out a cigar, and after some difficulty lighted it. A few minutes later they reached a safer path and Veloso again led them on at a canter.

Rojas was pulling at his cigar and was surprised to see it burn so quickly. He was half through it five minutes after he had lighted it. All of a sudden it flared up into a flame like a torch.

"*Patron!*" shouted Bello from behind, "do you want to give us away?"

"I never saw a cigar do that before," called back Rojas apologetically, throwing it down.

"It's because the air is so dry; you will see it on your face tomorrow," laughed Bello from behind him.

The horses were cantering slowly, breathing hard, and their motion was full of effort. Their

breathing was quick, laboured, and spasmodic. As they went higher the air became more rarefied and every exertion required double effort. The motion of the struggling horses was not the easy smooth action of the slopes to where the horses belonged. Rojas's leg hurt him; the chafing was being renewed, and every movement of the horse brought more intense pain. His chafed thigh felt as though a red-hot iron were being applied to it. He knew that by this time the skin must have gone; and he felt his underclothes sticking to the raw flesh; he suffered in silence. The pricks from the sharp thorns on the lower part of his legs were not even heeded by him, although often they penetrated deeply. Another cause of discomfort was the butt-end of the carbine knocking against his bad leg. At last about two in the morning, as science accounts night to be morning, as they made a turning in the path they saw a light quite close. The horses must have seen it at the same time, as they renewed their efforts with vigour, and a few minutes later they arrived at the carabinero's station.

Rojas could hardly dismount; and when he did so, he had to hold on to the wall to avoid a fall. He seemed to have lost control of his legs and could scarcely walk. Bello helped him up the steps and on towards a blazing fire inside the carabinero's mess-room.

"Don't get too close to the fire, Señor Rojas," said Veloso; "it's dangerous."

"Why? I am chilled to death; can't you see I can hardly walk? I want to get warm."

"You are under my charge, Señor Rojas; and have got to do as I say. Come; sit down and drink this hot coffee, quick; we have only half an hour here."

Rojas obeyed meekly and found new life on drinking the hot brew. He was getting some experience; he knew it was best to follow the instructions of Veloso, who was an old Cordillera man.

A quarter of an hour later a steaming *cazuela* was placed on the table; Rojas, Veloso, and Bello did full justice to it.

"Any news of Beckert?" asked Rojas.

"No, didn't expect any here," answered Veloso. "Fragaza would not take the main path, knowing he was being followed; must have made detour; taken him three hours; ought to pass ahead of him by midday; make it two o'clock in the afternoon; then go on slowly."

Veloso ordered the fresh horses to be brought round; and, going to an inner room, reappeared with a saucer of melted fat and a bottle of pisco—a white brandy made in the country. He filled his *caramayola*—a leather-covered flask, which the carabineros use on Andean expeditions—handed

the bottle to Bello to fill his and in an earnest voice addressed Rojas:

"Señor," he said, "if you want to carry this quest to a finish, put some of this grease on your face."

"I have already said I wouldn't; and I won't," answered Rojas.

"Put some over your eyes anyway," urged Bello; "you won't smell it or feel it there."

"If you insist, I will do that," said Rojas; and, dipping his finger in the now congealing grease, he smeared his eyelids and rubbed the fat in, wiping them with the serviette.

"That's better," said Veloso. "It's half-past two; next post six o'clock; fresh horses. Must keep up the scheduled time my Major ordered."

They started on their journey at a walk; the horses were cold, it would not do to begin with a canter at once. The wind had increased to half a gale, and cut their faces like a knife; they could feel its iciness penetrate through their clothes right to the skin. Rojas shivered; he felt those changes of temperature more than Veloso and Bello, who did nothing but go up and down the Cordillera. His clothes also were thinner, and not in the least fit for the climate or the job. At midday he had felt oppressive heat, the sun rays had penetrated his clothes and he remembered the heat of them on his back. How nice and

warm they had been; how painfully cold it was now! His leg felt better; at a walk he did not even feel its soreness; and Beckert!

"Sergeant Veloso," he called out, "had we not better get on?"

"Right, sir."

Veloso had again taken the lead. The path was fairly wide, two could ride abreast. It inclined gently upwards. After half an hour, Veloso slowed down to a walk. Their way now lay at an angle of forty-five degrees; it was a direct climb up the mountain-side. Thorny bushes were on each side close together; and through these Veloso led on.

Rojas again began to suffer acutely. To hold on to the horse's back he had to press his knees tightly to the saddle. The horses climbed the mountainside with a kind of kangaroo jump, which renewed the pain. He felt the thorns enter deeply into his legs. He felt certain that the thorns chose the same place where other thorns had pierced him before; these were minor troubles. He held to the horse's mane; his head and chest nearly flat on the upward-climbing horse's neck. By holding tight with his hand he could release the pressure on his leg. He felt sure it was beginning to swell.

"Never mind; if I catch Beckert I shall be satisfied, no matter what happens to me," he

thought. He lifted his head to see how much more there was to climb. They had been going for about ten minutes and had not really made any great progress. The mountains seemed nearly perpendicular and the summit miles away. Up, up, they went; and with every step renewed pain. This was kept up for an hour, when Veloso ordered a halt. They were about half-way up the side.

"Is that the divisional line with Argentine? The summit?" asked Rojas, pointing to the top of the mountain range.

"There are about a dozen of these before we get to the limits," laughed Veloso, "but it's not all up; got to come down too; then get up again, next range."

The wind was chilling; and Rojas felt it more now that he had not the exertion of holding on, or the movement of the horse.

The horses' breaths came in two long jets of white vapour; theirs also. Rojas's moustache was frozen hard. He tried to pull the ice off; it pained him and he desisted.

"Veloso, my moustache is frozen; what shall I do?" he asked.

"Leave it; because it will freeze again; should have shaved it off long before."

Bello chuckled; so did Veloso.

They started again. Up they went for an-

other three-quarters of an hour. They had arrived at the top. They looked down, and Rojas wondered how they had got up. The sun was rising; they could not see it, as it was below the range in front of them, but the sky was becoming light with a bright rosy tint.

Their way lay due east. As they looked forward they could see the next range in the distance; the top like gold, the sun's rays gilding the snow. Between lay the valley, a gloomy hollow, low, dark, and forbidding; hope of success glimmered in the distance. "How much suffering to reach it!" thought Rojas.

Down they started at a sharp canter; after five minutes of it Rojas thought he would faint. The lump made by the buckle and the stirrup-leathers on the saddle under his thigh just touched his wound. Every step, every movement, was an agony; and in the intense cold of the morning he could feel the perspiration flowing down his forehead. He held on to the back of the saddle, and so found some ease for his leg. In this way he rode until they reached and began ascending the second mountain range; he transferred his hold on to the mane.

At about five-thirty they arrived at the post. This was half-way up the second range of mountains and in a very sheltered spot. The building was a brick semi-circular arch, its sixty feet of

length being about twenty feet thick; on the sides of the arch were a few small windows, at each end a door. The strange shape is designed to stand the pressure of the enormous quantities of snow which accumulate during the winter-time and the weight of it when it begins to thaw in the summer.

Veloso and Bello dismounted; Rojas could not. He called Veloso and asked him to stand by whilst he did so. He lifted his right leg over the back of the horse and as soon as it was over the left leg in the stirrup gave way and he came heavily to the ground. Veloso caught him in his arms; and, shouting to Bello, they carried him in. As Rojas had dropped, Veloso had noticed on the saddle, on the spot where Rojas complained of the chafing to his leg, a big brown blood stain.

Once inside they sat him down some distance from the fire; and Veloso poured some pisco into a glass with hot water, and gave it to him; he was chilled to the bone. He drank and felt better, then looked at his leg. It was swollen from the foot upwards; but strangely enough from the wounded part to the hip it was its normal size. His right leg was in the same condition up to the knee. Veloso, seeing this, signed to Bello to stand on the other side; and both taking him by the arms, Veloso said:

"Try to walk a little, it's want of circulation.

Come to a room; a little massage; bandage leg; then all right."

Rojas stood up; and, insisting on walking unaided, followed Veloso. His leg was examined, and revealed a wound the size of a saucer. To this more grease was applied; and a tight bandage placed around it. Then both Veloso and Bello each massaged a leg; copious applications of grease being used to prevent the skin from rubbing off.

Half an hour later all three were sitting at a table before the never-failing *cazeula.*

Rojas's face was pinched; his eyes looked dull, large dark rings under them giving him a strange look. His cheeks were sunken with suffering; his complexion, usually pale, was a rosy healthy colour, but it was more than rosy—it had a tinge of purple. Veloso once more insisted on greasing his face. Rojas stubbornly resisted.

"As you like," said Veloso. "Your leg is nothing to what your face will be. Worse than a mule. *Caramba!* you'll pay for it later on."

On hearing this Rojas gave in; if his face was going to be worse than his leg he would give way to all petty aversions. He dipped his finger in the grease and began rubbing his face with it gingerly. The smell of the grease was not pleasing; but Veloso had put the fear of worse pain before him, and he did it thoroughly. When he had finished,

and was being comforted with a cigar, the thought of Beckert came back to him.

"Veloso! shouldn't we be getting on?"

"Yes, sir; horses will be around soon."

Rojas stood up and paced the room before the fire. His legs were sore, very sore. As he paced up and down, he found his movements becoming freer; he exercised his legs and even tried a little jumping. He was fit now, he thought. Another little drop of pisco for the chill morning, and on again in the fulfilment of duty.

"Do you think we are up to Beckert by now?" he asked Veloso.

"Not far, anyway. Hasn't passed here; made another detour; we may catch him any time now."

"Let's get on then, quick!" said Rojas.

They started again. Rojas had some trouble to mount his horse. He complained that the bandage on his leg impeded his movements. Veloso again led; and, after a few minutes, started at a sharp canter. It was now full daylight, and they felt the sun's rays striking with full force. The wind, dry, cold, and rarefied, blew on their faces; and Rojas felt the contrast.

They had gone about an hour at a smart pace, when Veloso, holding up his right hand, suddenly came to a sharp halt. The others pulled up, and they saw a dead horse on the road.

CHAPTER XXXIX

VELOSO dismounted, and, handing his reins to Bello, asked them to keep back. He advanced very slowly and carefully up to the dead horse where it lay on the road. He placed his hand on the horse's head, and felt the eyeball with his fingers. He then made a turn around it, examining the ground and surroundings most minutely. He walked up and down in a semicircle for fully twenty minutes. Every now and then he would pick up something from the ground, examine it, hold it to his nose, then throw it away.

At last he stood quite still, gazing into the far distance towards the north-east.

They were nearly on the top of the range and could see for miles, north, south, west. This range ran northwards to a distance of twenty miles from where they stood. The river Bio-Bio had cut the mountain in two, leaving a chasm some six thousand feet deep by a thousand feet wide. The snows accumulating during the seven months of winter melting in the summer form an enormous torrent. Through the thousands of centuries it has cut through six thousand feet of

granite and porphyry and the strata of bronze and copper.

But neither Rojas nor Bello had an eye for the beauty of the turbulent waters, churning their way through the mountains, and gathering in their flood the riches they deposit in the plains which they fertilize.

"*Caramba!*" cried Rojas, impatiently, at last, "when is he going to finish looking at the scenery?"

He had scarcely spoken when Veloso turned back to them and said:

"Horse belongs to gringo; been dead two hours. They've been chased; got away; Fragaza changed his horse here; Beckert put his saddle on Fragaza's worn-out horse. There is the evidence," he said, holding up a piece of hair caked with sweat and dust.

"Which way did they go?" asked Rojas.

"They have started this way," said Veloso, mounting, and leading the way towards the north-east; "but they must make a long detour; they can't get through the Bio-Bio anywhere on this side of the range. They can't get over the top of the range northwards at all; ice stops them; still, they took that road; you can see it yourself." He pointed to the ground.

Rojas looked at the ground where Veloso pointed; but could see nothing except the prism-

shaped stones and an occasional thornbush. The ground was not such as to leave even the print of an elephant's foot.

Still, Bello immediately agreed. His training from youth had made him notice the tiny fungus-like vegetation which should grow on the under side of the small stones, instead of which the green growth was lying facing the sun—sure proof that someone had disturbed them, and not more than two hours ago, as the sun and wind would by this time have scorched them and turned the bright emerald hue into a dark dull green.

Veloso, who had been looking northwards, suddenly made up his mind, and said:

"Come on; up we go like hell!"

He spurred his horse straight up the mountain-side; it was the shortest way. "He wants to reach the top and overlook the valley formed by this range and the next," thought Rojas. The fugitives could not be more than ten miles away, and in an atmosphere where you can see objects at sixty miles with the naked eye, ten miles is nothing.

Their way was now nearly perpendicular; the horses were used to this and took them up in the kangaroo-like jumps which afforded Rojas such intense pain. Veloso was cheering his horse on with the usual "*anda hijuna, anda hijuna,*" which was taken up by Bello; the strange chorus, ac-

companied by yells every once in a while, led the struggling horses to further efforts. They reached the top after an hour's furious riding.

"Come on!" yelled Veloso, continuing his ride for a further five minutes, until they had left the summit well behind. He stopped; ordered Bello to dismount; and, getting off his own horse, he asked Rojas to hold their horses for them for a short while.

Veloso started at a run back to the summit; unslinging his carbine as he went and placing a cartridge in place. Bello followed suit. Back they ran on the mountain slope to its crest. Just before reaching it, as Rojas could see, the two men dropped on all fours and crept slowly up to the very summit. They had taken their hats off and worked their way up like snakes, slowly, close to the ground, little by little; it seemed interminable. They appeared motionless; but he knew they were moving. Then they were quite still. At last! Had they seen something? No; yes! Veloso was moving a bit further in advance. He could see him motioning to Bello, flattening his hand on the ground, to keep still. Then he came to a dead stop; fully twenty minutes must have gone by. He again saw a slight movement of Veloso. His feet changed position slowly, carefully. Rojas was on a slight incline, quite half a mile away. He could not see be-

yond Veloso; but Veloso could see from the summit, where he now was, for a range of quite sixty miles. Had he spotted them? Heavens! what anxiety! what torment to a man of action to play a passive part!

Suddenly a puff of smoke from Veloso's carbine; then the detonation! Rojas spurred his horse, leading the other two, up to where Veloso had fired.

But Veloso had jumped up, and run down the incline, followed by Bello. They disappeared from Rojas's view. As he came up to where they had been lying, he saw what had happened at a glance. About four hundred yards away a man stood perfectly still with both hands up; at his feet lay his horse apparently dead. Veloso and Bello were running to him with their carbines pointing at the man. About a mile away he could see a horseman galloping furiously down the mountain-side towards the northeast, towards the chasm worn in the mountain by the waters of the Bio-Bio. Rojas at once made up his mind. He rode down, leading the two horses, to where Veloso and Bello were. He gave the horses up to Bello, and rode right up to the captured man.

"Take your hat off!" he commanded.

The man at once took it off, and he saw that it was not Beckert. He wheeled his horse round, and made off in hot pursuit of the fugitive horse-

man, without a word. He spurred his horse, and used his *rebenqui*—a long thick leather strap tied to the end of the reins—as a whip, without mercy.

His bowler hat which had been black was a greenish grey and looked ridiculously out of keeping with its surroundings; his poncho flying in the wind, his cheviot trousers torn to shreds and showing patches of his underclothing, Rojas cut a sorry figure enough; but to cap it all, his patent-leather boots with light uppers were patent no more.

The man Fragaza, his hands upheld, looked after him in wonder; and at last burst out laughing. Veloso and Bello could not help joining in the laugh. The galloping figure was grotesque indeed. Still, this man was riding as though his life depended upon it, or rather as if his life did not depend upon it. He was riding recklessly, without the slightest regard for his life; any false step of his horse and he might lose it. A moment later he was lost to view behind the undulating mountain's side.

"Where in the devil has he gone to?" asked Veloso.

"After the little birds," answered Fragaza, meaning that the man had gone off his head.

CHAPTER XL

VELOSO came up to Fragaza, where the man stood with his hands above his head.

"Where is Beckert?" he asked sharply.

"Who is Beckert?"

"Where is Ciro Lara?"

"Who is Ciro Lara?"

"Where is your companion?"

"You see I have none."

"I see you have none," said Veloso, with contempt, "but you had one with whom you changed horses this morning. We want him for murder; now answer."

"I don't know murderers; I wouldn't associate with their likes." Fragaza spoke with sullen resentment.

Veloso lost patience.

"You wouldn't, would you; well make friends with this!"

Veloso stepped up to him and struck him a terrible blow in the mouth. The man fell to the ground, stunned.

Veloso shook him by the throat.

"Come on, no pretendings with me, you old

fox! where is your companion? Quick! *caramba!*"

Still the man did not answer; and a kick in the side did not rouse him.

Veloso turned to Bello.

"*El rebenqui*," said Veloso—"quick!"

Bello took a *rebenqui* from the reins. As he did so the old bandit, in his pretence of a faint, managed to pull out his revolver and fire two shots, one at Veloso, one at Bello. Veloso he hit in the thigh; Bello he just grazed on the shoulder. The next moment he lay insensible from a downward blow on the head from the butt of Veloso's carbine.

Veloso leaned on his carbine and gazed at the still figure.

"Shall I never learn? Silly idiot that I am! He'll kill me yet; his sixth dirty trick on me!" Veloso was furious with himself. He turned to Bello.

"Tie him up well," he ordered Bello; "and take away the gun!"

Veloso sat down calmly; pulled down his clothes; looked at his wound; asked for his knapsack; took out a long pair of pincers, inserted them in the bullet wound, which was bleeding profusely, felt for the bullet, found it, and extracted it after several failures; taking now and again a sip of pisco. During all this probing, for some

twenty minutes, Veloso never uttered a sound; the drops of sweat rolled down his eyebrows and nose and dripped on his legs; but of his great suffering not a whimper. As he drew out the bullet he turned to his comrade.

" Bello, a bandage and the powder."

As Bello handed him these, he applied the boracic powder over the wound; pressed some into it; and bandaged it tightly. He dressed, and lay down for two or three minutes.

Suddenly he roused.

"Didn't get *you*, did he, Bello?"

"Not so bad," said Bello. "Only a scratch."

"Let's see."

Veloso raised himself on his elbow.

Bello pulled off his tunic, and pulled his shirt open, revealing a long wound on the shoulder.

Veloso got on to his feet and examined the wound.

"Nothing much," said Veloso.

Having wiped the wound clean, he applied the powder, then bandaged the man. All carabineros get a sort of first-aid instruction in the treatment of accidents and wounds.

Veloso turned to the fallen man at his feet.

"Now for *this* treacherous old bird; but where the devil is Señor Rojas? He *must* know," he pointed to Fragaza, " and we will make him tell; come on, Bello!"

Veloso poured some pisco down Fragaza's throat; he gave the fellow a good dose, then instead of rubbing his hands to make him recover he began plying the *rebenqui* over his body. He smote with a will, not without a touch of vengeance.

After a minute or two the man opened his eyes. Veloso never left off. The man writhed in pain; the exertion was telling on Veloso and he stopped.

"Where is your companion?" he asked.

As no answer was forthcoming, Veloso ordered Bello to carry on with the leather-strap. Bello had not lost any blood, and he was muscular; he was angry; and he thirsted for revenge. He applied the thong in such fearful chastisement that Fragaza quickly spoke.

"He was about a mile behind me; his horse was lame; the other man with the funny hat has gone after him," he said painfully.

Veloso's face cleared.

"Bello, ride after him. No, wait!

"Which way would your fellow take?"

"Any way; he don't know where he is; he's lost."

" Bello, go ahead; and meet me at Carbineros No. 4 Station."

CHAPTER XLI

IN the meantime Rojas was galloping like one possessed; he could see the fugitive every now and again. From what he had gathered, the man could not ride east because the range was impassable. He could not ride more than twenty miles north, as here his way would be stopped by the Bio-Bio, which is not fordable.

He would ride him down; his horse was fresh, whereas the other's must be very nearly done.

On he went, his eyes fixed on Beckert's track. After a few minutes he could see that he was gaining on him.

These first moments of excitement had acted as an anæsthetic to his wound and fatigue. He had forgotten everything except the man galloping ahead of him. He had forgotten the perils of this chase. A false step of his horse and he might be thrown down a thousand feet. If this were to happen, then Beckert would get away. He seemed to realise this all of a sudden. How rash he had been! if only he had told Veloso and Bello, they would have followed on to make sure of apprehending the gringo, as they called Beckert; if he had only done this he could have ridden the

man down regardless of personal perils, or of his escaping.

He confessed to himself that this was wholly due to his ambitious, selfish motives. Yes, he had wanted to catch Beckert single-handed, alone; to bear all the glory, to be known not only as the first-class city detective but also as an Andean hunter of criminals. If he failed, and Beckert escaped, his hopes of advancement and glory would be shattered; it would be due to his own folly. If he were successful, then all would be well. He must succeed. He slowed his horse to a canter. He could see Beckert about half a mile ahead. At times he lost sight of him owing to the undulating sides of the mountains, but a moment or two after he had him in full view again. There was not even a track, much less a road. They were traversing a steep mountain-side studded with dwarf prickly vegetation; the horse shied every now and then to keep out of the way of the thorns.

Rojas's ardour was cooling fast. The nearness of his prey, the imminence of the supreme moment when he would have to maintain a duel to the death with this murderer, reacted on his nerves. He was a rotten shot; Beckert was an excellent shot. The wound on his leg hurt him fearfully. He slowed down to a walk; detached the carbine from the holster, pulled the mechanism towards

him, and the cartridge shot into its place, ready. He held the carbine in one hand, and in infinite pain he spurred his horse and started again at full gallop.

Great was his surprise, after a few minutes' hard riding, to see that the fugitive was only some hundred yards away, and walking his horse very slowly. He slowed his horse to a trot; and, holding the carbine to his shoulder, fired a shot in the air.

At once Beckert wheeled his horse round, and, halting, facing him, held up his hands.

"*Por los diez mil demonios*, he is a coward," exclaimed Rojas gleefully. He kept at a trot, pointing his carbine at him the while, and when at some twenty yards' distance, called to Beckert to dismount and throw down his arms. Beckert at once threw down a small rifle, as used in rifle ranges, and a revolver. Rojas asked him if those were all the arms he had; and Beckert nodded.

"Look the other way and hold up your hands," commanded Rojas. As the man did so, Rojas walked his horse up to Beckert, and, drawing a pair of handcuffs from his saddle-bag told him to put his hands behind his back and promptly clasped the handcuffs on his wrists.

Rojas got off his horse, and searched him. He found no firearms, only a dagger, which he took away. He picked up the toy rifle and revolver,

and slung the rifle on to his own saddle and the revolver into the saddle-bag. He then lifted Beckert on to the saddle of the weary horse that had failed him, and mounting his own horse with difficulty he took Beckert's reins and led Beckert and Beckert's horse back the way they had come.

CHAPTER XLII

BECKERT had not uttered a word from the moment he had heard the shot fired at him. He had been in a speechless fright.

All the time that Rojas had his carbine pointing at him he obeyed orders like a lamb. When Rojas put his carbine back in its holster, Beckert somewhat recovered his composure.

They had been riding in silence awhile when Rojas heard Beckert's voice for the first time.

"If you are a *saltedor* [brigand], tell me what ransom you want, and you will be paid," he said.

Rojas answered in a level, cold voice:

"I am not a *salteador;* I am Inspector Rojas of the Secret Service; and you are arrested for the murder of Tapia."

The German feigned surprise.

"For the murder of Tapia! Who do you take me for?"

"For Beckert, for Wilhelm Beckert, Chancellor of the German Embassy—and a dirty, foul, cowardly swine."

"You are entirely mistaken; I am Ciro Lara; and I have my papers here in my inside pocket; examine them, and you will regret your mistake."

"I know all about Ciro Lara, your nephew—he never existed except to provide you with a passport; no, you scoundrel, you are going on with me to Santiago, and then to hell, with ten lead bullets in you for company."

"Señor Rojas, I will give you twenty thousand dollars right now if you will let me go; I am Ciro Lara, I don't know Beckert. I have very important business, very pressing business, in Argentina. Any delay may entail a great financial loss to me. If I get to Argentine tomorrow, I make two hundred thousand dollars — a stroke of business which only comes once in a lifetime. You are on the wrong track; I must get to Argentine or I shall be ruined. Why, I would give you twenty thousand dollars if you get me safely there by tomorrow. What say you?"

"I say you are a dirty lying dog, and a murderer besides, and that you are coming to Santiago with me, and then going a long voyage — as long as the one on which you sent poor Tapia."

The wretched German evaded the charge as if he were not concerned in it.

"You don't believe I have the money," he said; "just search me and you will find it; do, and you will see I am telling the truth."

"*Caramba!* I will," said Rojas, wheeling round. If he, Rojas, had the money, Beckert could not tempt others.

Beckert's face lighted up with joy.

Rojas moved his horse up alongside Beckert and asked where the money was. Beckert told him, and he took it out and counted. There were thirty thousand dollars in Argentine notes, about twelve thousand dollars in Chilean paper money, and three drafts on a German bank in Buenos Ayres for eighty thousand dollars each.

"Now are you satisfied that I can pay you?" asked Beckert.

"No, I am not."

"What do you mean? that is good money!"

"I know it is; I also know it is not yours, so come along."

"But, Señor Rojas, you promised you would take me to the boundary."

"I did nothing of the kind."

"*Ach! Gott in Himmel*," sobbed Beckert and burst into tears. "Robbed! robbed!" he muttered, "robbed after all I have gone through!"

It was ludicrous to see this man's face streaming with tears. They tickled him on their way down his cheeks and drove him to the strangest contortions; his hands being handcuffed behind his back, they were useless to him.

"What you have gone through is nothing yet to what you have before you," said Rojas.

"Herr Rojas, please let me go; you have all the money now; please!"

Rojas did not answer. Beckert continued whimpering, begging for his release; crying hysterically; appealing again; all to no purpose. At last he fell silent.

In the distance they could see Bello coming towards them; a few minutes later he was congratulating Rojas on his capture.

Rojas explained how easy it had been, and what a coward Beckert had turned out to be.

"They are all the same," said Bello; "it's marvellous what a cowardly lot murderers are."

"I am not a murderer," said Beckert.

"But you are Beckert?"

"Yes I am; and I killed Tapia in self-defense."

"Did Tapia assault you?"

"When I went into the office in the morning I found Tapia and another man breaking into my desk. I seized a hammer that was on the mantelpiece and tried to defend myself. They both attempted to kill me; but I was very lucky. I hit Tapia on the head with the hammer and the other man ran away. When I was alone with the dead body I was panic-stricken at what I had done; and instead of notifying the police I ran away. I must have been mad with fright. There! that is what happened. Now take off these handcuffs. I am a German diplomat; and I have no fear whatever of the consequences. I appeal to you, Señor Rojas, for my diplomatic immunity."

"As you have confessed that you are Beckert, I have no objection to taking off the handcuffs. You will have diplomatic immunity when you prove that you are Beckert, and when your Ambassador guarantees that you will be tried for this in Germany. He may not do so; he may prefer to let you be tried here. Anyway, for my purpose you are Ciro Lara until you reach San Pedro prison."

Rojas took off the handcuffs; and a strange relief and eagerness came to the German's face. It was not lost on Bello.

Bello asked if Beckert had any arms; Rojas said no. Bello was not satisfied; he searched the saddle-bags and holsters on Beckert's horse and found a large six-shooter fully loaded.

"*Caramba!*" exclaimed Rojas, "the fellow had a regular arsenal; and all for show."

Beckert was ready with a lie.

"I had these to defend myself from the bandits and wild beasts I might meet. I am not a fugitive from justice; my conscience is quite clear."

"Who set fire to the Embassy Office?" asked Rojas sharply.

"Tapia."

Rojas shrugged his shoulders.

'I am afraid, Beckert, that you can only tell the truth by mistake. You bought a false beard some time ago, what for?"

No answer.

"You forged the Ambassador's signature on the passport of Ciro Lara's, what for?"

Beckert remained silent.

"This revolver and rifle are brand new; what did you buy them for?"

No answer.

"And then again are we to believe that Tapia, after you killed him, got up and set fire to the offices? Do you say that Tapia rose from his eternal sleep and dressed himself in your clothes; took your ring and put it on, as well as the articles of jewellery you used to wear?"

Beckert's face was downcast and he did not utter a sound.

"Are we to believe that Tapia, after he was dead," continued Rojas, "got up, took the hammer, with which you killed him, and broke to bits the bones on his leg on the same spot and on the same leg which you broke some time ago? And, still more marvellous, do you say that, after breaking his leg, he used the hammer on his own teeth, broke nearly all of them right off by the roots? And, still more marvellous, after all this he poured petrol down his own throat and soaked himself with it as well as a lot of incriminating papers, not incriminating to him, but to you; and, after pouring petrol over them, set fire to his dead body?"

"Stop! stop! for God's sake," exclaimed Beckert.

"And then Tapia lifted his arm, his right arm, to heaven and prayed for vengeance; and God heard him. That arm was what gave us the clue. Shall I tell you how you killed him?"

Beckert did not answer.

"Silence means consent. When Tapia came back from the bank at about nine-twenty, you asked him to open the lower drawer of your desk, which you said was stuck, but which in reality you had locked. When he was straining his utmost to serve you, you dealt him a blow on the back of the head, then a second blow fiercer than the first, then with a dagger, which now has no point, you finished him by striking deep and leaving the point two inches inside that faithful man's heart. You then stripped him, and dressed him in your clothes; after this you dragged him by the right arm and put him in the empty fireplace; it was lucky for you that the fireplace was large and built for burning large logs but it was not large enough for your purpose. You took the screen which usually stood there, and hid your victim behind it; but his right arm kept coming down, and when it did not shove the screen away it showed; you could not hide the body effectively. You then got down on your knees and shoved the

poor dead victim's arm up the flue of the chimney, where it stayed at last, when you were almost despairing of achieving your object. You feared the Ambassador might arrive. I can see you now, bathed in perspiration, your hands blood-stained, your face and clothes bespattered with the brain of Tapia, run into the back room and fetch a sponge to wash the floor; which you did. Then you went into the back room; and, after washing, changed your clothes; and after a last survey of the scene you sat down to await Baron von Bodmann's arrival, whom you also, as I now see, intended to murder. If he had not been accompanied by von Welcheck, his doom would have been sealed."

"My God! were you there?" asked Beckert.

"No, I was not there, but that is the only way it could have happened, and the way it did happen; was it not so?"

"But I acted in self-defence at the beginning. Tapia and the other man were trying to break into my desk."

"Yes, after von Bodmann and Welcheck left, you locked the door and waited five minutes lest they might have forgotten anything; you then, in feverish haste, dragged the body out; again got the hammer, and broke the man's leg; then you hammered away his teeth till you thought they would not be recognizable. With a knife you cut

the upper lip away, as Tapia had no moustache; and, in case of accidents, his clean lip might give you away. You then took your wedding ring and placed it on his finger; you also put your own pin in the tie; your cigarette case with your initials you placed in his pocket. You tried to fix your eyeglasses on his nose, but you shrank from it. His dead eyes were staring into yours, and you dropped the glasses on the floor near the head. Your nerves were gone; Tapia's eyes seemed never to leave yours; you lost your head. Then you ran into the back room, and got ten tins of paraffin and two of petrol. You opened the tins of paraffin and soaked the body with the paraffin as well as all the furniture in the room. You then took out of your desk a lot of incriminating papers, and placed them about the body; but you were in a hurry, you did not spread the papers properly, and they did not burn through. You then went back and put on different clothes—a slouch hat and a poncho. You went back to the room and opened the two tins of petrol. One you placed well open near the body; from the other you poured the liquid into Tapia's open mouth and again soaked his clothes, hair, and hands. You opened all the inner doors and all the windows that led into the courtyard, in order to prevent an explosion from the petrol gas. You then made a trail of petrol right up to the door; you opened

the door that leads into the small hall, threw a match on the petrol trail, and, crossing the hall, opened the outer door, went out, locked it, and, putting the key in your pocket, walked away. At the corner you stopped, and waited to see the effects of your workmanship. This did not take long; ten minutes had not gone by before the fire was well started. You then walked away, satisfied with your work, and only regretted that there was but one victim instead of two, because, if you had also killed and burnt von Bodmann, your disappearance would have been quite secondary. My work would have been more difficult. There is just a chance that you might have been considered dead for ever; just a chance—a very remote chance."

Beckert rode on in silence — he spoke never a word.

CHAPTER XLIII

BECKERT'S hope of escape seemed to recede as they advanced. He had at first hoped against hope that Rojas might have been a brigand. He had certainly had a moment's short-lived joy when he thought Rojas would accept the tempting offer he had made. What made him despair was the finding by Bello of the Smith and Wesson six-shooter. He now had his hands free; but he had no arms, and practically no horse, for the one he rode was so lame that it could hardly walk.

Without a horse it was impossible for him to escape to Argentine. He would have died of cold and hunger, as it was, had he not been caught; Fragaza had deserted him, and left him to his own devices, which would have been to wander aimlessly along the frosty sides of the mountains, which, rolling upwards in successive ridges, met at the boundary of Argentine in a polar atmosphere above the clouds. To cross this boundary, alone, would have been impossible. He had nothing else to do but submit to the inevitable; he had one hope—his one chance lay in pleading diplomatic immunity—appeal to his Ambassador; and, if it

failed with his Ambassador, to the Kaiser himself. He rode, with Rojas and Bello on either side of him, a very dejected German. And he bent all his wits on the technical point of his diplomatic immunity. Rojas also was considering this business of diplomatic immunity.

Eventually they came up with Veloso, riding with Fragaza, who was handcuffed and had his feet tied under the belly of his horse. Veloso had taken the bit and reins off the horse, and had placed a lasso around its neck and so led it.

"*Por las once mil Virgenes!*" (By the eleven thousand Virgins!) exclaimed Rojas. "I thought you had shot and killed that horse."

"Not such a fool as all that, Señor Rojas," laughed Veloso. "Don't you know I get a reward? This horse? He is a beauty."

"But you shot him!"

"Oh, yes!" answered Veloso, "but I aimed well and hit it just where I wanted; see here!" He pointed to a dark red spot on the horse's neck just under the mane and about four inches behind the ears.

"Absolutely the right spot to stun him; you see? I extracted the bullet and up he got full of life and strength; the better for a little rest, and a little bleeding," said Veloso proudly.

"Do you mean to say that you actually picked

that spot at four hundred yards on a moving object, and it wasn't a fluke?"

Bello laughed.

"I think, Señor Rojas, he could hit a jumping flea at five hundred yards; he has done this trick twice to my knowledge," said Bello.

"*Caramba!* it is incredible," exclaimed Rojas. "It is marvellous."

"I told you I was rather a good shot when you were afraid of these two," laughed Veloso; he shrugged his shoulders with contempt at the two miserable men.

"If I had known what you meant by 'rather a good shot' I wouldn't have objected to the dividing of our forces," said Rojas; "and I may tell you I was not afraid of myself, but of their escaping after disposing of our bodies."

"I believe you," said Veloso, and he added, with frank admiration; " you are a plucky one for a *futre* [knut]; but the worst is to come, Señor Rojas; so cheer up before your face gives you hell."

The sun was by this time high in the heavens, and was sending down its scorching rays through the clear pure atmosphere. Owing to the excitement and elation at the capture of Beckert, Rojas had not noticed how fiercely the sun's flare struck his cheeks and nose. His whole face was begin-

ning to blister, and his nose was scarlet and swollen. The lids of his eyes were also burning to an alarming extent, and swelling slightly. He did not trouble about any of these symptoms however; in fact his only trouble was his leg, which was giving him most excruciating pain.

After an hour's ride, Beckert's horse fell, and would not get up again. Beckert was then handcuffed by one hand to the girth of Bello's saddle, and they resumed their journey, having to measure their speed by Beckert's walking powers.

It was after midday by the time they arrived at the post of carabineros, which they had left in the early morning.

Rojas was dead-beat; he could not get off his horse. His eyelids were so swollen that he could only see through the smallest slit which he kept open with the greatest effort. His nose was covered with blood. The sunburn had itched, and he had scratched. His lips were twice their natural size, and were also bleeding. His leg was so swollen that his boot had been burst open; the buttons on them had given way to the pressure from his bleeding ankle. He was helped off his horse, his leg rebandaged by Veloso, and the panacea for all ills, pisco, administered to him internally, and some vaseline externally.

After four hours' rest, they started again on their journey. Beckert being provided with a

horse. Rojas's suffering was indescribable. Only his big heart kept him from succumbing. He had said he would go through it, and he never flinched. Veloso admired this hero to duty. He urged him to stay behind and rest for a few days, but all to no purpose; Rojas had said that he would get Beckert, and take him back to Santiago; and he was adamant. That night, at the next post of carabineros, Rojas had to be tied down to the bed, his hands crosswise, lest he should tear his face to pieces. His leg was so inflamed that it had set up a fever; his brain wandered; he begged and begged that Beckert should be brought to him and be handcuffed to his own wrist.

In his rambling brain the idea of Beckert escaping was paramount. Veloso, to calm him, after endless refusals submitted to his wish, and had Beckert brought in and handcuffed to Rojas. Two carabineros were posted in the room to keep watch over the prisoner, and to attend to the detective's wants.

The first hour must have been unpleasant for the Chancellor. Rojas kept on in a disjointed way recounting most vividly and with the minutest details every step in the murder as he had reconstructed it. At last, as the night wore on, he fell into a restless sleep.

CHAPTER XLIV

NEXT morning they started on their downward journey. Although weak, and still in a feverish condition, Rojas insisted in forming part of the escort of Beckert. His condition was pitiable; his leg was so swollen that the trousers had to be ripped open at the side and laced up the thigh with string; his face was one scar.

Notwithstanding all this suffering, for four days they so journeyed; arrived at Punta de Ricles and there entrained. Rojas's dogged pluck never flinched or weakened; during these four days on horseback he never uttered a murmur of complaint, nor even alluded to his sufferings.

On their arrival at the railway station at Punta de Ricles they were met by the local police authorities, who at once proceeded to place the prisoner's feet in irons. Beckert protested angrily and threatened them with the grave consequences of their insult to his diplomatic immunity, whereupon he was shown a copy of the German Ambassador's note to the Foreign Office:

Imperial German Embassy,
in Chile, Santiago, February 16th, 1909.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform your Excellency

that I have to-day received the following orders from my Government. In conformity with Article One of the code for criminal procedure, Chilean Jurisdiction does not extend to Beckert's person by reason that he was a diplomatic employee of the German Government, and therefore according to International Law was liable only to German Jurisdiction. Notwithstanding this, taking into consideration that the crime committed by Beckert has so deeply and justly moved public opinion and the national feeling of the Chileans, the Imperial Government, in order to give a manifest proof of amity and respectful trust, has decided formally to renounce in this exceptional case all the rights which Beckert might derive from the official position which he held.

From this moment Beckert is deprived of all official status; and my Government consequently has no objection to his being prosecuted in Chile as though he had never held any position at the German Embassy in this capital.

I have great pleasure, your Excellency, to avail myself of this opportunity to express to your Excellency my most sincere sentiment of special gratitude for all the efforts which have culminated in the detection of this unfortunate crime and the apprehension of the culprit. I must also manifest my profound admiration of the capability of the Secret Police.

Allow me, your Excellency, to reiterate my feelings of highest consideration and esteem.

Bodmann.

To His Excellency,
The Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Señor Rafael Balma.

As Beckert finished reading, he sat down; and, burying his face in his hands, sobbed silently, his shoulders shaking convulsively; the last ray of hope was gone!

He was lodged at San Pablo prison the next day.

CHAPTER XLV

AS Beckert sat in his lonely cell, his haggard eyes gazed on his doom. The shadows came and went; and each long day for long months he died many times. He pitied himself. He knew that he was alone in his pity—not another living soul gave him a grain of it. He knew that not a living soul would shed a tear for him—and the day of punishment crept ever nearer. Whatever the "good old German God" might do for him in Germany, he had no sway in Chile.

He could hear this champion of justice who had dogged his steps like a sleuth-hound, reconstructing his hideous crime, getting into his vile skin and speaking in words the abomination that he himself had feared to put into cold logic. He saw this man Rojas peer into the very deeps of his black soul. He never erred by a hair's breadth—never made a slip—he might have been present behind that screen all the time.

Beckert knew that the Kaiser's Ambassador, steeped in the morale of Ruthlessness as he himself was, hearing how Beckert had planned with like ruthlessness the Ambassador's own violent

end, would now move no lever of the German arrogance to save him or mitigate the hideousness of his foul crime.

He knew that the Ambassador had roughly tried to compel a pension of two thousand pounds a year from the Chilean State for the weeping "widow"—that the weeping widow wept no more, indeed now knew him for the vile thing he was, and knew—that she was robbed of a handsome dowry! He knew that the details of his life of intrigue with women and his sordid speculations had reached the ears of the one woman for whom he had any real affection; and that she realized his infamy.

He knew that the German "dignity," grossly outraged by him, would hide itself behind a lying, fawning obsequiousness to the Law, since he had led the German Ambassador to make a vulgar fool of himself for the bitter laughter of a whole people; and that the fawning obeisance to the Law of Civilization would be bitterness untold for the pompous man who had dared to put disrepute on the arrogance of German Kultur. He knew that the Ambassador fully realized the titter that would run through a continent at the pomp of the burial of a Chilean porter. He burst into tears at the cruelty of it all.

He went over it again and again.

How hotly he had worshipped this German

god of Ruthlessness! How even as a student, down on lip, he had cheered his professors when they gave it forth as the new gospel of the German dominion of mankind! How keenly he had followed it—religiously pursued it—in all his acts! He had shrunk from nothing. Yet—its backbone was cowardice! It could not stand against the Law it despised. A mere Spaniard fellow, with the old "outworn" creed of humanity and neighbourly love and goodwill, could pull him down and slay him, the Chancellor of the German Embassy, before the eyes of the Ambassador of Ruthlessness—and the Ambassador had to bow and make obeisance!

He was caught like a rat in a trap. He had to die a shameful death. And—

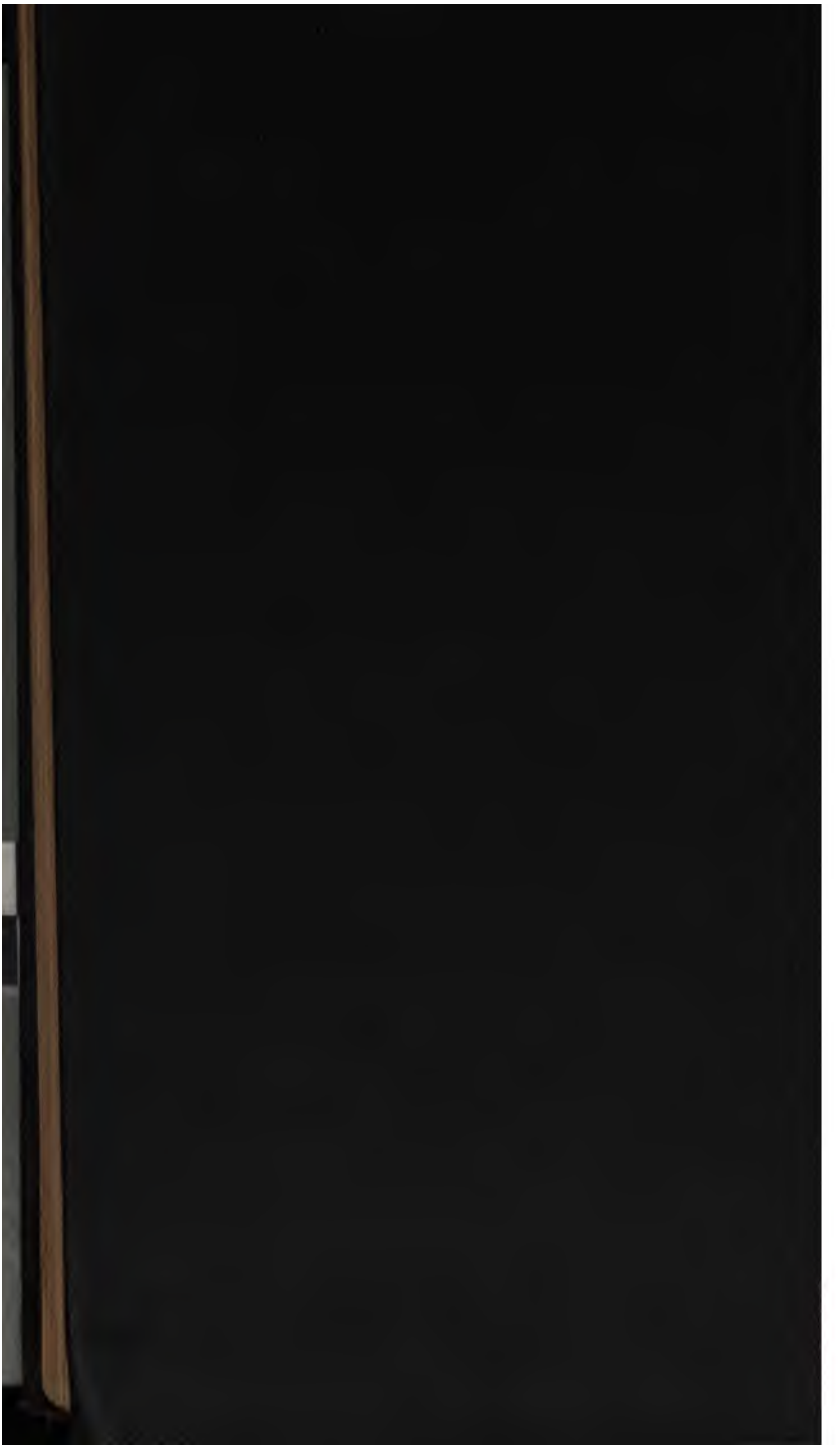
He had not one friend on earth, he knew not a soul but would spit upon him as an unclean thing. Even the gods he had worshipped and who were as foul as he, even they feared to approve him—they who had bred him! For he knew that the German Embassy was the soul of Germany; and he was of the flower of its vile garden. He knew that what he had done to this poor, faithful, innocent man was what his own people were plotting and planning day and night to do to the innocent world. They boasted of it—drank to it—sang to it. Why did they allow him to go to a felon's death for it? they who had it all down,

planned to every detail, written in black and white? all cut and dried to put all Chile thus under heel. Had he not, indeed, had the plans for it in his own keeping—the approved plans?

For two weary months his haggard eyes gazed on the hideous thing, went over it again and again; his brain committed the murder again and again, and his terror-stricken soul died for it again and again.

At the end of two months he left his cell for the last time—stepped out of it, his mouth parched, his limbs a-tremble, and, being stood against the wall, was shot down by the levelled rifles of his executioners, dying a felon's death—himself his only mourner. . . .

And the German Embassy and the people who bred him, this flower of their strange culture! Well, they forgot to pay Tapia's widow the two thousand pounds a year that they had demanded for the German Chancellor's "widow." They forgot to send a word of apology to the Government they had insulted by their insolent and overbearing attitude and conduct when they thought that the Embassy porter, Tapia, had murdered the German Chancellor, Beckert. That the German Chancellor Beckert had murdered the Embassy porter, Tapia, was quite another affair. They forgot that, as long as the snow is white upon the Andes, the name of Germany will stink

in the nostrils of the people of Chile; and the voice of the contemner of Prussianism is the voice of a dead man who, by and through a toothless mouth, whispered the guilt of the German into the quick ears of the Law—a Law that fears not to pull the beards of Ambassadors, nor to drag the eagles of ruthlessness from their ridiculous perch, nor to pluck the All-Highest from his bombastic throne.

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